

1507/1021

RATIONAL
DEVOTION.



T H E
S C I E N C E
O F
Rational Devotion.

F R O M T H E
Writings of the Learned and Celebrated
M U R A T O R I.

By the REV. *ALEXANDER KENNY*,
Of JOHN-STREET CHAPEL.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A PREFACE by the TRANSLATOR,
CONTAINING,
A critical ANALYSIS of the WORK,
A N D
A brief ACCOUNT of the AUTHOR,
and his WRITINGS.

“ If you look upon Religion in the Great, as it ought to be
“ viewed, you will not find in it the Puerilities of trifling
“ Devotion.— *True Devotion*, by the celebrated MURATORI,
“ will preserve you from all the Dangers of a mistaken Cre-
“ dulty. I advise you to read that Work again and again,
“ and you will profit by it.”

GANGANELLI, 30th Let. Vol. 1.

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M.DCC.LXXXIX.



TO THE
MOST REVEREND
DR. *JOHN-THOMAS TROY*,
T. A. D.

AS IN EVERY RESPECT THE MOST
ELIGIBLE AS WELL AS PROPER
AND NATURAL PATRON
OF THE AUTHOR
AND THE
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THIS TRANSLATION IS MOST
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T H E

TRANSLATOR's PREFACE.



THE high Reputation which the learned *Muratori* has so deservedly acquired throughout all Europe, in all the Departments of Literature and Erudition, must stamp with respect every thing that proceeds from his Pen, wherever good Taste and solid Learning are found to be predominant; and *Italy* in him can truly boast of one Writer, whose so numerous and variously diversified, as well as excellent Productions, to enrich the Literary World, render him alone, equal to an Host of Authors. It is true indeed, that Taste and Learning seem to have little or no Alliance with the subject of Devotion; but surely it is closely connected with good Sense, which is the Foundation of the former, and must be, as well as Zeal, according to *Knowledge*, to make it truly respectable. The learned *Fleury* in one of his Discourses on Ecclesiastical History, has very properly re-

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futed

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futed the strange Adage which pretends to assign Devotion as the Offspring of Ignorance, of this Ignorance be gross, much more when attended with a refractory Presumption, and above all, if by this Term should be intended, what may be truly called genuine, solid and substantial Devotion. A submissive Ignorance, indeed, and a desire of as much Instruction, as the Capacity will admit, will not preclude those, whose Station in Life debars them from ample, full, and thorough Instruction. It is here offered in the following Work, and indeed suited to every Capacity, as well as, from the compendious Execution thereof, adapted to every State and Condition, from one whose Abilities may excite and nourish a well founded and rational Confidence.

In a matter of such nice and delicate Importance as Devotion, many Mistakes may occur, many Delusions may arise; an able Guide is therefore the more necessary and acceptable. If we consider the numberless, secret and powerful Artifices of human Passions, and the wretched Blindness thereby occasioned, we shall justly attribute these Errors more to this so fruitful Source, than, in general, to that of Ignorance. Man has always had a strong Propensity to satisfy the internal Demands of Religion, and keep his Conscience in a tranquil State, by some external practices of Devotion that cost but little,

little, much rather than by an arduous Contest with his Passions, especially that which happens to be predominant, to obtain a Victory at the laborious Expence of listless Indolence, and powerful Inclination. This great and capital Delusion, as it is ruinous in its Consequences, should then be removed, the Fallacy of this destructive Medicine should be detected, and by recurring to the genuine Source, to the first, leading, and invariable Principles of Religion, all Illusions will vanish, and salutary Truth will stand unveiled to open View.

There is nothing more desirable in Matters of *positive Doctrine*, and where Recourse must be had to the *Dogmas* of the Church, than to establish them with the utmost Clearness and Precision; Nothing in any respect foreign should be introduced therein, and the highest degree of Exactness should be observed in ascertaining the precise Boundaries, beyond which no devotional Zeal, however well intended, should be allowed to wander, especially when aspiring to give *Dogmatical* Instruction. Many evils may flow therefrom, as well to ignorant Catholics, as to our separated Brethren of other Persuasions, by improperly extending the Belief of the former, and giving the latter strange and contemptible Ideas of the Catholic Faith, and of those who profess it, to say nothing of that hatred and animosity which may be

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produced

produced thereby, the dire Effects of which are so fatally destructive of all Union among those, whose civil and political Interests, at least, ought to be the same. The Advantages of Precision are great and manifold; Without it Argument is but an empty Name, a confused Medley of inconclusive Sounds, Reason is bewildered and lost in the indigested Chaos of her ill-directed Operations, Reflections and Conclusions are built upon Sand, and all the Powers of the nobler and better part of Man are expended upon something less than a Shadow. The unauthorized Extension of Belief in the Minds of illiterate Catholics, is also to be carefully provided against in strict *dogmatical* Matters; meer rhetorical Exposition, without due Precision and exact Definition, may produce this Evil, which may sometimes be attended with consequences dishonourable and injurious to the Catholic Faith. The Nature of this latter is such, that whatever is *really* and *truly* belonging thereto, is such *precisely* in *one* fixed Degree, in *one* point of View, and *in no other*: According to the Scriptural Expressions, we are neither to decline to the right nor to the left; This Medium we must keep, to preserve our Faith alike from inadequate Deficiency, and turgid Extravagance.

Amidst the many various Modes of Devotion, or rather, expressive of this habitual Affection of the Mind and Heart, the chief
and

and principal in every respect is that, undoubtedly, which disposes us to the entire, strict, and faithful Observance of the Law of God. This is the infallible Touchstone of all true Devotion. Without it, it were nothing but a vain and irrational Attempt to please *the Searcher of Hearts* by a specious Outside. Meer external Homage may sooth the Pride, or gratify the Vanity of Man, but can never attract the Divine Approbation. It is however carefully to be remarked that none of the Minor Species of Devotion (as they are termed by *Muratori*) no devotional Practices, however minute and, perhaps, insignificant they may appear to the Eyes of some People, are to be despised or considered with Indifference, provided that they have any tendency to create, or forward the Advancement of, that grand and capital Mode of Devotion, of which we have spoken. They who erect but the Scaffolding, have yet some general share in the Merit of the future Edifice. Any means, to conduct to the Attainment of some great and solid End, deserve their portion of Commendation. Considered in this light, they rise into respectable Importance, and contemptuous Indifference becomes as irrational as irreligious. *Then* these pretended *Minutæ* are acceptable to God, and serve to maintain an Holy Union of the Soul with Him. The most enlightened Doctors and the greatest

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Saints

Saints have considered them as the Supports and Ramparts of Piety. Attention to Matters, relatively small, in the conduct of human Life is the Parent of good Order, and in Devotion, of a laudable systematic Regularity. By these, every Virtue increases, and advances with rapid strides towards Perfection, by forming solid and permanent Habits through the Means of many reiterated Acts, and by an unceasing Vigilance of Attention. None can surely be rationally despised, when we are assured that a poor Cup of Water, given in the Name of God, will meet with a Reward, through His infinite Goodness, so superior to the Action, as to annihilate every Idea of Proportion.

We find, in worldly Affairs, the greatest Attention paid even to the most trifling *Minutiae*, when we imagine they may be in the least conducive to effect a favourite Purpose of Moment; What will a Man despise or overlook that may tend to a comfortable Establishment? What will not a Man do to acquire the Countenance and Protection of a powerful Patron? It is not rational to treat that minute Attention in the Service of God as unnecessary and trivial, when the same Attention is invested with Importance, when directed to catch the Notice and Approbation of an earthly Sovereign. Whenever the former is in Question we should not, with a very mistaken fastidious Delicacy, a Pride extremely

tremely ill-directed, look upon any thing as beneath us, as unworthy our practical Pursuit. The Effect will partake of the Dignity and Importance of the Cause.

This is certainly a Matter of delicate Moment, and deserves a studious and careful Attention. It is an incontestable Principle that the Heart is the proper Seat of Piety and Devotion; but it were a great and capital Mistake, to conclude any thing from hence to the Prejudice of any Manifestation thereof in Practices, however comparatively slight and trivial they may appear. If the Heart really possesses the Treasure of Devotion, it will, indeed, naturally break forth and manifest itself in many different ways; Occasion will attract Exertion, and this, however small, will yet gratify the devout Impulse of the Moment. Without this permanent Eagerness, this Readiness to seize on every Opportunity, without the deliberate and frigid Exactness of weighing, at the time, its comparative Importance, there is but too much reason to fear, that the above incontestable Principle vanishes them into a frivolous Pretence, a weak and inconsistent Apology for Inaction. The Glory of God, the Edification of our Neighbour, and the Honour of Religion, are the three grand and leading Objects of Piety and Devotion, such are the Matters of unremitting Exercise to a truly devout Mind, and it is by a Variety of

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stated and casual Observances that this will arrive to a full, and deserve an incontrovertible Manifestation. Thus the Church, enlightened and conducted by the Spirit of God, besides the internal Worship, which she so strongly enforces, and supposes as the Basis of all true Piety, has yet deemed it necessary to establish also an external Worship, by the Acts of which variously diversified, the Devotion of the Faithful may be kept in Exercise, and receive a daily incessant Invigoration. Such is the foundation of her Festivals, Ceremonies, Offices, public Prayers, Assemblies in the House of God, Abstinence and Fasting; She has so well comprehended the great Utility, and even the general Necessity of these and the like Observances, that many of them are enjoined under all the Strictness of formal Precept, and all are recommended as Matters, the wilful, and much more, the contemptuous Omission of which can never be compatible with any Profession of true Christian Piety. Nothing is therefore more conformable to to the Spirit of the Church, nor consequently, to the Divine Spirit which constantly presides over all her Operations, Decrees, and Counsels, than an active Devotion which never slumbers into Apathy, but is always impelled to some occasional pious Observances, either authorized by long and venerable Tradition, or suggested by the lively Effervescence

cence of a warm, yet enlightened Zeal, which looks for Gratification in Employment, and naturally expels the dull and torpid Indifference of Inaction.

These Observations I have deemed not unnecessary, for the fuller and more certain Apprehension of the general Design of the Author, lest that from his so earnest Inculcation, of what is indeed the first and capital Mode of Devotion, essentially and indispensably necessary for all Christians, some might be betrayed into an erroneous Contempt of those Aids thereto, which of themselves indeed are not of much Importance, but are immediately invested therewith, when they actually dispose for higher Pursuits and greater Exertions. To this, *Muratori* himself has very judiciously adverted, as the careful and intelligent Reader will easily observe. Considered in this light, we behold the whole Scope and Design of the excellent Author, as wise and rational, as it is completely instructive; indeed, the Wisdom of the Manner corresponds throughout, with the high and delicate Importance of the Subject. The Knowledge of what is essentially conducive to serve the best and most valuable Interests of Man, requires an able and intelligent Master to teach it, the *Science of the Saints* is surely the first of Sciences, and all others, on comparison, must vanish into nothing, as a slender taper opposed to all the broad

and fiery glare of the meridian Beams of the Sun; As Eternity is infinitely more momentous than fleet and transitory Time, so must that Science be, which carefully provides for the former, while it regulates the latter with true and genuine Prudence and Wisdom. *Seek ye first* (says our Divine Master) *the Kingdom of God, and the Righteousness thereof*;* any preference to this most important of all Affairs, in Favour of any other Pursuit whatsoever, is to the last degree inexcusable and irrational. Yet we too often pretend to overturn this Order, to contradict this Law of Priority, to substitute in the place of it a System of Conduct entirely opposite; We are expressly instructed where to establish an incontestably just and rational Preference, we are assured, that for temporal Goods of any kind, we should harbour no anxious Solitude of Desire or Expectation, for that all these things should be *add'd unto us*, yet these latter are the first and primary Objects of our Wishes, while the truly great and capital Object of Pursuit is but secondary, if not in listless indolent Theory, at least in Practice. An empty Assent of Preference, in frigid Speculation, is deemed a sufficient Sacrifice of Concession.

Our temporal Concerns call forth all our Activity, and herein it appears to be to the last Degree indefatigable, where the extreme
Ardour

* *S. Luke, 12. Ch. 31. v.*

Ardour of Pursuit stifles the Sense of every Difficulty. A romantic Contempt of Danger laughs at the Suggestions of a cautious and wary Prudence, as cold and despicable, and all manner of Pusillanimity is compelled to fly from before the face of undaunted and determined Resolution. It should seem, as if the World possessed then the Power of working Miracles, and of rendering not only possible, but even not difficult, that which otherwise would appear to be beset with insurmountable obstacles, and far above the relative powers of Man. It will give Health and Strength to the Weak and Sickly, and make them undergo Labours both of Body and Mind, capable of destroying the most robust Constitutions. It will substitute a lively Activity, in the place of the most confirmed and inveterate Laziness, and make a Man pass from all the Indolence of utter Apathy, to the most chearful Vivacity of Action. Cowards are exalted into Bravery, and all the natural Terrors, arising from our Apprehensions of Dissolution, lose almost entirely their so great Force and Influence. Storms at Sea, Battles, Sieges, the most perilous Situations, are not much weighed and considered by him, whom an Intrepidity of this kind has steeled into a Fortitude, to which he was before an utter Stranger. Fools are taught Cunning, and in a moment learn to make use of the most refined Stratagems

tagems and Artifices, to banish all manner of ruinous Indiscretion, and to turn, in an instant, every circumstance as it arises, to the Accomplishment of their main Design. Such are the Miracles, which the World can operate, and such the astonishing Effects it can command. Such is the intrepid Resolution, and zealous Activity, we think ourselves bound in common Sense to assume. So that, if we but compass at length the End we had in View, we deem ourselves happy, and reflect not at all on the so many Difficulties and Dangers we had to encounter, they quickly vanish away from our Mind and Recollection; If all our plans and designs should finally prove abortive, we grieve not, in like manner, for all our past Labours, our difficult or dangerous Exertions, but only inasmuch, as the Ideas of them are connected with the total Miscarriage of our Enterprize. Such is our Sense of the high Importance of some worldly Pursuits, and of the manner of compassing them, which, as we think, has to defend it, all the shielding Sanction of Prudence, and all the definitive Authority of Reason.

Those who are conversant in the Original Italian, will immediately see many Alterations, and some Omissions, throughout the Course of the Work. I flatter myself that, upon Reflexion, they will perceive the rational Necessity of them. Many Matters, in the

Original

Original, are meerly local, and confined, as to any profitable Information, to Italy alone; To an English Reader, they would therefore convey nothing to compensate for Time and Application. This Mode of Conduct will then, it is hoped, excite no Idea of a presumptuous Erection of imaginary Superiority in the Translator, who has diligently endeavoured, to keep the Spirit of his Author and the intentional Simplicity of his Stile always in View, without the smallest wish or desire of Deviation. Abuses, Errors, and Mistakes, somewhat similar to those adduced by *Muratori*, might here be cited, or in Notes and Illustrations, did not the Zeal and Vigilance of our chief and principal Pastors render it unnecessary: This was particularly exemplified, with respect to the devotional Practices, degenerated into manifold Abuse, and perhaps not originally judicious, which were in use at the different *Wells* in this Country. The Title of this Work, not being prefixed to any devotional Tract of *Muratori*, may also excite some surprize, but as it was designed as an aggregate Production from different Treatises, the Title was deemed a Matter of free Choice and Election. The *Regolata Divozion de Christiani*, (or, literally,) *the Regulated Devotion of Christians*, has been indeed chiefly and principally made use of, but such a Title would appear rather stiff and aukward, a summary

ry Title therefore, and more agreeable to an English Reader, was adopted. It is here to be remarked, that this very Work is that which is so highly commended, by the Illustrious *Ganganelli* in his Letters, under the Title of *True Devotion*, as applicable to the intrinsic Merit and firm Solidity of this valuable Performance. After a brief and general sketch of the Author's Life, I shall dismiss it, with a well-founded and rational Expectation, that it will raise the Affections of the Heart, inseparably united, with intellectual Culture and Improvement.

LEWIS ANTHONY MURATORI was born at *Vignola* in the Territory of *Bologna*, in the Year 1672. After his first Studies, his Vocation led him to embrace the Ecclesiastical State, to which, by his moral Conduct in every respect, he was as great an Ornament, as in process of Time, by his singular Erudition, he became to the whole Republic of Letters. Nothing could be more exact and regular than his Method of Study. He applied himself but to one Branch of Literature or Science at a Time. He studied in successive Order, the *Belles Lettres*, Philosophy, Theology, Jurisprudence, Antiquities, and the other Sciences, so that at an early Age he was deservedly esteemed as a Man of universal Learning and Erudition. The custody of the great *Ambrosian Library* of
Milan

Milan, could hardly be consigned to better Hands, although he had scarcely attained his 22d Year; he was already old in Knowledge and Literature. But his own Sovereign the Duke of *Modena*, conscious of the great Literary Treasure he should possess in such a Subject, soon attracted him to hold a similar Employment for himself, as also. made him Keeper of his Archives. He obtained in the Year 1716, the Provostship of *Santa Maria di Pomposa*, and from a Disposition entirely devoid of Ambition, a Mind totally devoted to learned Pursuits, he never looked for higher Preferment. His Study was, in a manner, the Seat of his Existence, for from the Multitude of his Compositions, we must conclude that it was almost the only Scene of his whole Life. His transcendent Merit soon made the different Literary Societies of Europe ambitious to have a *Murator* enrolled among them; the Academies of the *Arcades* in *Rome*, of the *Crusca* and *Colomberia* in *Florence*, and that of *Cortona*, entitled the *Eturian*, joyfully invited and adopted him. But these honours were not confined to *Italy* alone; the imperial Academy of *Olmütz*, and the Royal Society of *London*, were alike well pleased to reckon so illustrious a Name among the Number of their Associates. He kept up a constant Correspondence with all the chief and primary *Literati* of all Europe, and by the most
engaging

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engaging Modesty captivated their Friendship, while the prodigious extent of his Erudition ensured their Respect and Admiration. An happy Union, and not often to be met with, where transcendent Literary Merit seems to extort, with some degree of Pain, a Tribute of almost unwilling Veneration from conscious Inferiority. Many Men of Letters have deservedly risen to the highest Summit of mental Applause, while, although with so much intellectual Approbation, the Affections of the Heart have remained, for them, in a State of utter Apathy.

The Works of this great Man will place Him on a Level with the most famous *Literati* the World has ever produced; He may rank with a *Petavius*, a *Ducange*, a *Mabilon*, a *Martene*, a *Montfaucon*, a *Selden*, an *Usher*, and a *Grotius*; Upwards of 40 Volumes in folio, besides a Number of quartos. &c. attest his indefatigable Application. They are upon various Subjects of Erudition and Literature, chiefly History and Antiquities. His great Work on the *Italian* Writers of History would alone immortalize his Name; It is in 27 Volumes, folio, with Notes replete with Learning, but little known, and the deepest, as well as, most judicious critical Researches into Antiquity. Another very curious Work, and a considerable Aid to the former is on *Italian* Antiquities

quities in 6 Volumes in folio ; They are both in the highest Estimation among the learned. Nor did these severer Studies and more austere Pursuits so totally engross his Attention, but he sometimes sported occasionally in the fair and recreative fields of Poetry ; the Italian Muse was also indebted to him, for some elegant Compositions in that, his native Language. No man had ever less of Pedantry, or literary Bigotry, than this illustrious Writer, for he never attached himself so blindly and exclusively to one Science, or Branch of Literature, as to hold in contempt, or affect to despise all others ; Knowledge, in all her Universality of Charms, attracted and gratified, on every side, his mental Faculties. It is true indeed, that but few, very few, can even approximate to this universal Gratification, that a close attention to one Pursuit is, in general, to be strongly recommended, but let it be here remembered, that we speak of a *Muratori* ; the Rule of *Le Clerc*, in his *Ars Critica*, is generally just and founded upon good Sense, that we should endeavour, as much as is possible, to reach Perfection in some particular Branch of Science or Erudition, but apply ourselves no further to all others, than merely to avoid the Reprach of gross and shameful Ignorance.

The so studious and sedentary Life of *Muratori* did fortunately not abridge it ; a Life so valuable to the Republic of *Letters*,
for

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for he lived to the Age of Seventy Seven, and upwards, after having afforded the learned World Abundance of Gratification, esteemed and honoured by many Potentates, and particularly cherished by one of the greatest Men that ever filled the Chair of S. Peter, *Benedict XIV.* a Pontiff not less amiable for the overflowing Goodness of his Heart, than respectable for the rare and uncommon Endowments of his Mind, in whom the Learned had a most honourable Associate, and beneficent Protector. Our Author was buried in the Church of his Provostship, in the Year 1750, with this short and simple but expressivive Inscription on his Tomb;

*Hic jacent mortales exuviae Ludovici Antonij
Muratorij, immortalis memoriae viri.*

*Here Muratori's mortal Spoils do lie,
A Man whose Memory shall never die.*



T O

TO THE
CHRISTIAN READER.

THE
AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IN the Catholic Church there is an Abundance of Books of Devotion and Piety : besides the almost innumerable Productions in this way, that wear the stamp of Antiquity, every Day produces something to gratify the Taste of Novelty ; and this important Subject has been so much discussed, the Matter of so frequent Illustration, that any new Mode of treating it, most commonly terminates in expressing, in other Words, what so many have before, and, perhaps, much better expressed. There are not even wanting many wise Persons, who do not so much approve of so great an Abundance of
Books,

Books, of every size, on this Subject, and those chiefly, that propose some new Mode of Devotion every Day ; for this reason, that they may too often occupy the Time which a pious Christian ought to bestow, in preference to those truly solid and excellent spiritual Books, which we know to have been written by Men of universally acknowledged and eminent Learning, Abilities and Piety, and who, certainly, deserve to hold the first place in administering to the Faithful their daily Food of Devotion ; besides, that it is to be apprehended that these minor species of Devotion (as they may be called) may, perhaps, occasion a Neglect of that which is solid, necessary and essential, as being most needful to a Christian, in some, who may, perhaps, be tempted to adhere to them in some measure, by a kind of exclusive Preference. After these Concessions, it may very reasonably be asked, why I should wish to swell the Catalogue of Devotional Books ? The Question is exceedingly proper : And I answer, that I do not intend to offer to my Readers a professed Treatise on this Matter, which they ought to investigate in the Works of so many holy and pious Writers, who so ably and feelingly have pointed out, and exhorted to the way of true Piety, all those who are, or ought to be desirous of this so necessary Knowledge. My chief and primary Idea, in this Work,

is

is nothing else but to establish and make known, in what, *precisely*, true and solid Devotion consists, by distinguishing it from those Modes of Devotion, which are comparatively superficial, and slightly touching upon some others which have the appearance, or the reality of Superstition.

Would it were not so! Yet there have always been, and there still exist in the Church of God, some Persons who give rise to certain Opinions, and Form of Piety, which cannot be said to be always conformable to the Spirit of the Catholic Church. There are not wanting others, who, through a well-meaning, but ignorant Simplicity, fall into Excesses, and introduce or foment Abuses, which, in some Measure, deform the native Beauty of our most holy Religion. Are such Blemishes to be tolerated? Whoever is truly zealous for the Honour of the Church of God, will readily answer the Question; yet, whoever ventures to disapprove of them, will most probably encounter the hazard of Complaint and Accusation. To what can this tend? Whilst these Irregularities and Improprieties subsist, to smother them in utter Silence, is it not a tacit Approbation of them, and to act in Reality against the Will and Intention of God, who certainly desires that his Church should be as pure and perfect as possible, in the Opinions and in the Exercises of Piety? St. Paul tells

tell us, that God has been willing to form to himself "*a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, nor any such thing, but that it should be holy and without Blemish.*"* Is it not to act in Opposition to the same Apostle, when he tells us, "*Prove all things; hold that which is good; from all appearance of Evil, refrain yourselves.*"† Those who object the danger of Scandal to the Weak and the Ignorant, do not perceive the danger of a greater, to the wise Lovers of the Church, and much more to the Enemies thereof, if they observe, that whoever endeavours to correct devotional Improperities, is more likely to meet with Dislike and Disapprobation, than Gratitude. In this case it would be only just to complain of him alone, who should so injudiciously and indiscreetly treat of superficial or false Devotion, as to lessen the Esteem of that which is true and essential.

As I am about to embark in this delicate and important Enterprize, I cherish the hope of avoiding the least danger of doing hurt, as my intention is certainly directed to the sole Purpose of being truly useful and serviceable, to the best of my Knowledge and Abilities: For my principal View is to point out that solid Species of Devotion, to the pursuit and acquisition of which, every true and genuine Christian ought to be animated

* *To the Ephesians, c. 5. v. 27.*

† *1. to the Thessalonians, 5. c. v. 21.*

to aspire. If in this Disquisition, I shall be sometimes obliged to take some notice of certain occasional Improprieties on this head, it cannot surely do any Injury to that Devotion, which is essentially solid and important, to which I shall give all due Commendation, warmly exhorting to the exercise thereof, as entirely conformable to the Spirit of the Catholic Church, wherein it is really and truly reduced to Practice.

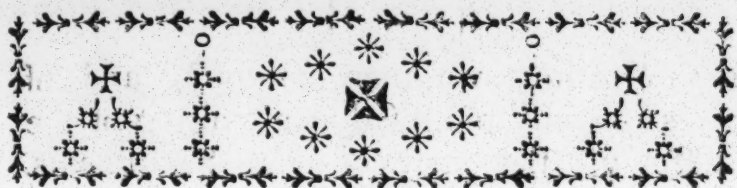
The Holy Council of Trent has even strongly recommended the Abolition of all Abuses and Excesses in this way, comprehending them even under the name of *Scandals*; that is, as noxious Weeds that so easily, and as it were, necessarily spring up sometimes, even in the best Pastures. The Roman Catholic Church is most pure in her Doctrines; how much the purer also she shall make herself to be known in the exercise of Devotion, flowing from the source of her own holy Documents and Instructions, so much the more beautiful and glorious will she appear. Would to God that every one were animated with this Wish and Intention alone! But it is hardly to be hoped for; because the impulses of Self-love too forcibly excite Men to maintain and uphold to the uttermost of their Power, their own respective customary Practices and Opinions, without reflecting whether Prejudice, Vanity, or some other Passions, do not hinder them from

from beholding, that which is *invariably* and *universally good*, and even in what may, in part, deserve that Appellation, that which must be allowed to be still *better*. As for my part, I am resolved to disclose my Sentiments on this Matter, not, indeed, to pretend to instruct the Learned, but the common Mass of the People, who can, and will chuse to read this Work; flattering myself, that if I please not the Class of Enthusiasts and unthinking Zealots, I shall certainly not offend the Wise, and every Person who prefers, to all other Considerations, the Beauty of the Catholic Church, and the immaculate Purity of her holy Documents and Instructions.



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O F

Rational Devotion.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Devotion which God requires from us, in order that we may be True Christians.

WHEN through the very great Grace, Mercy and Favour of the Most High, we are regenerated in the Waters of holy Baptism, we acquire the Name of Christians, and are called to profess the immaculate Religion of JESUS CHRIST, but most commonly without knowing at the Time the Duties of this Profession and Religion, because that much the major Part of us are enrolled in it in our Infancy, that is, at a Period when we are incapable of understanding the Nature of
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the Obligations we then contract, and of what is solemnly promised in partaking of the Benefits of this first of the Sacraments. When Christians are arrived to the Years of Understanding, Oh, how many moral Diversities are observed among them! Many, very many, are Christians but in Name, who abandon themselves to all manner of Iniquities, in direct Opposition to the holy Faith they profess. There are others who think themselves quite safe from this Censure, and that they deserve to be considered as good Christians, provided that they make the Sign of the Cross, recite some Prayers, and never omit on every Festival to hear Mass, but merely as a thing of course, and with little or no Portion of proper Attention; while at the same time they are quite given up to their temporal Interests, to Diversions, to Idleness, to an Indulgence from time to time of their irregular Appetites, to the great Offence and Displeasure of God. Of this Class of People so luke-warm, nay so cold, so negligent in the great Affair of their eternal Salvation, would to God that few could be found of the Gospel-Profession! It is therefore highly necessary to consider, under what Conditions we have been admitted by the Means of Baptism into the Society of the Faithful in the Church of God. We are to look upon ourselves in no other Light but as Soldiers, when they enlist under



under the Banners of some earthly Sovereign. They oblige and bind themselves in the strictest manner to his Service on all Occasions, to be ready at every Moment to execute his Commands, and even to expose or lose their Lives for him against his Enemies. Every one who by Baptism is enrolled in the Army of Christ does just the same, or certainly it is intended that he should be precisely in these Dispositions. He has solemnly renounced to every Attachment with the Devil, to all his Poms and all his Works, that is to say, to all vicious and immoral Actions of every kind, in order to attach himself entirely and solely to the Lord our God, the Lover of Virtue and good Works. The Christian has pledged himself to keep his Commandments, to love him above all Things, and his Neighbour as himself, and never depart upon any occasion whatsoever from his Obedience and Fidelity. This generous Sovereign, on the other hand, not imitating the Princes of the Earth, often so slow and negligent in rewarding the Labours of those who serve them, has pledged Himself to assist in all Temptations and Trials, those who undertake his Service, and even if through Weakness and the Impulse of Concupiscence, they should happen to fall against the Dictates of his Law, He has promised never to forget his Mercy, for the truly Penitent who have recourse to him, having

instituted for this purpose the Sacramental Tribunal of Penance. Nor does the divine Liberality terminate here. Through his infinite Goodness, he has prepared for every one who faithfully serves him, an immense Reward in the other Life, that is, the Possession of Paradise, a Reward which may be called infinite, because whoever is admitted therein shall enjoy the beatific Vision of God, which is an infinite Good, together with all the Delights of his Kingdom, and this for all Eternity.

Thus we see that a real and mutual Compact is established between God and Man in holy Baptism. The latter obliges and dedicates himself to a singular and affectionate Service of his Creator, and a total obedience to his Will and his Laws. An obligation of this nature is termed in Latin, *Devovere se*; and hence is derived the Word *Devotion*, signifying that Affection, Attachment and Obedience, to which Man binds himself on his entering expressly into the Service of God, by a Profession of the Christian Faith in Baptism. For which Reason *S. Thomas of Aquine* says, that, “ *Devotion comes from Devoven-*
 “ *do*, whence those are termed *Devout*, who
 “ after a certain particular Manner dedicate
 “ and give themselves up to God, so entire-
 “ ly and without any restriction whatever,
 “ that they absolutely and totally surrender
 “ themselves

“ themselves to every thing that regards his
 “ Service. * ” He afterwards adds, that,
 “ *Devotion* seems to be nothing else but a
 “ permanent and unceasing Will, to put in
 “ practice immediately every thing that bears
 “ any relation to the Service of the Deity.”

Consequently then, Christian Devotion is an Act of Religion, which, as it is necessary for whoever professes the Faith of Christ, so is it of the highest Merit in the Christian, who by his Conduct and his Works ought to manifest, not less than true and well-disciplined Soldiers, that Fidelity and Readiness of Obedience, to which he has solemnly bound himself with respect to God. Although Piety be speculatively different from Devotion, as the former has for its object the Honour and Love of God, considered precisely as a *Father*, while the latter has in View *all* the Attributes of God, nevertheless, in general, or at least in common Language, both are understood to signify the same; for when we speak of a Devout or a Pious Man, we mean to intimate the same Attachment and Affection of the Faithful towards God, our Lord and our Father. It is of the greatest Utility to call frequently to our Remembrance the Nature and Obligations of this Compact established between God and Man, to which we common-

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• *S. Thomas Secunda Secundæ: Quest. 82. Art. 1.*

ly pay but too little Attention; as at the time of our admittance to Baptism, which is the first, in order, of the Sacraments, we were incapable of Understanding and the Use of Reason, and that we should always have before our Eyes the grand and essential Substance of that Devotion which is the great, the necessary and indispensable Obligation of the Christian; that is of him who has acquired a Right to the Inheritance of the Children of God. It is but too true that in the Minds of very many, and chiefly of those immersed in worldly Pursuits of every kind, this Obligation appears harsh, austere and grievous, not to say intolerable, because we have in ourselves another Law repugnant to that of God and Religion, and because we find ourselves besieged on all sides by alluring and strong Temptations, in daily Danger of not observing what we have promised to God, and engaged in an incessant Warfare. Nevertheless, it is most certain that God does not oblige us to any thing of impossible Observance, whilst by the help of his Grace, which is wanting to no body, he renders possible the execution of every one of his Commandments; and therefore it will always be our own Fault, base and reprehensible in us, if we transgress any of his Laws, and if we have not immediate Recourse to him when we begin to feel the Attacks of Temptation.

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Besides which it is necessary strongly and indelibly to imprint on the Mind a most important Truth, and but too little adverted to and considered by Christians. That is to say, that God commands us Nothing, and we are not bound to any thing with respect to him, which is not after all really and substantially for our own Good, even although he had not commanded it; we should put it in practice as rational Creatures, and as setting a proper Value on our own true and real Happiness even in the present Life. Let us take a proper, cool, dispassionate Survey of each of the Commandments, in order to consider the true Nature of each of the capital Vices, such as Pride, Covetousness, &c. We shall certainly find, that every thing is either prescribed or forbidden for our own genuine and substantial Advantage: For every vicious and sinful Action or Omission is either prejudicial and hurtful in some measure or other to Ourselves, to the Public, or to some Individual, and in hurting others we really hurt ourselves also, either by incurring the Penalties and Punishments of human Laws, or at least, by the Loss of Esteem and Reputation, which is of so signal Advantage in the World, by endangering our Health, risking our Substance, and the inestimable Blessing of Peace and Quiet of Mind. Where there is a moral Certainty of losing all or any of those precious Advantages, it is surely the

extreme of Folly to be so unmindful of the most substantial Pledges of all the real Happiness we can enjoy in this Life. Does God command that we should resist the Impulse of irregular and inordinate Desire, of Anger, of Gluttony, of Revenge, of such like strong and turbulent Passions? Is not all this in Reality for our own Advantage? Even the moral Philosophy of the Pagans knew and taught the Importance, or rather the Necessity of such a Resistance, in order to shield ourselves from many Evils, as they were at the same time convinced that it would be attended with many good Consequences. God enforces Humility as destructive of Pride; Charity, that is mutual Love between us, as being all Brethern, and his Children, an Abhorrence of Falsehood and of Fraud, Temperance, Justice, &c. All tend to establish what the very Laws of Nature alone exact from us for our Good, and which, if transgressed, must be productive of Evil in our present State, or at least diminish the temporal Happiness of Man. We err therefore against Reason and good Sense if we do not acknowledge that God, in obliging us to the Observance of his Commandments, has in View our own real and substantial Good: We are also ungrateful and unjust if instead of Gratitude we complain of the, as it were, unnecessary Rigour of his Laws, whilst they tend solely to the purpose of rendering us happy in this Life, and

and supremely blessed for all Eternity in a future State of Existence.

It is of the greatest Importance to us to comprehend thoroughly in what precisely consists the *only Devotion* to which a Christian is strictly and indispensably obliged, and to the Practice of which he ought to be chiefly and principally exhorted ; for the Spirit of Novelty which has always been, and ever will be, a most active Agent as well in the Spiritual as in the political World, through so many Ages wherein the Church of God has flourished, has been incessantly introducing various manners of exercising Devotion, but without considering their true Weight, Merit and Importance. There may indeed be invented some new Modes of Devotion, some new laudable Ideas on this Head in order to honour God, and to facilitate to the Faithful the means of pleasing Him, and of arriving to the possession of his Kingdom. Nevertheless, this may degenerate into useless Superfluities, and even into something worse. The solid substantial Modes of Devotion which are either necessary, or of the highest Utility for a Christian are precisely those, which are either commanded or recommended from the Mouth of our divine Legislator, or by his Apostles, instructed by him, or else by the holy Church, the faithful Interpreter of the Will and Intentions of God. Other Modes have proceeded from time to time from pious

Persons, some of which must be acknowledged to be useful to the Faithful, and worthy of Commendation, while others may appear rather superficial, but of little Moment, and some of these latter may seem rather irregular, if not also tinctured with Superstition. Moreover, even those which are the best and even essential to a Christian, although their own native Beauty can never be called in question; yet, by our own Fault and the Abuse thereof, they may tend to our Detriment. Can there be any Institution more worthy of the infinite Goodness of God than the Sacrament of Penance, by the means of which every Sinner, provided he be truly penitent, and firmly resolved upon the Amendment of his Life, may, at any time, recover the Grace of God? Yet, there are not wanting but too many who, because they behold that Asylum of the Mercy of God always open either calmly continue in a State of Sin, or very readily return to what they had declared, but a little before, to be the object of their Detestation.

In order to regulate our Devotion properly, it is necessary carefully to distinguish those pious Actions which are essentially solid and substantial from others that are simply helps to, and sometimes but appearances of Devotion. It would be also highly useful, to take particular Notice of whatever may be of little moment, and even irregular, in the practice

tice of this latter kind of Devotion; but I shall content myself with describing the general Outlines, both because the Matter itself is almost inexhaustible, and likewise because it might perhaps appear to the Ignorant and Superstitious, that plucking up the Weeds would prejudice the useful Vegetables, and destroying the Cockle would hurt the Wheat. This is a false Idea of the Matter, for the Parable of the Gospel alluded to, regards the Wicked intermingled with the Good in the Church of God, and not surely the Abuses of Piety. Nay, it is both useful and necessary to pluck up this latter Cockle, because it is hurtful to the Purity of our Faith, which certainly ought to be most dear to every Christian who is jealous of the honour of our holy Mother the Church. It is certain that some irregular Practices and Opinions may be and are actually found among the Faithful, occasioned by Interest, by a pious Vanity, by Hypocrisy, by Ignorance, Evils but too ancient among Mankind. These being either not adverted to or passed over in Silence, will naturally wear the Appearance of Irregularity, and be disapproved of by whoever loves Order in all things, and especially in whatever appertains to our holy Religion. From such Abuses and Excesses in the Practice of Piety no Age has been exempt, the holy Fathers acknowledging that such things always have been, and ever will exist in the

Church of God; but they are not for this Reason to be termed Defects and Blemishes of this Church, because she either expressly or tacitly condemns them all. If we peruse the Acts and Canons of so many Councils, so many Catechisms of the different particular Churches in Catholic Communion throughout the World, and particularly of the Roman, the Mistress of the Rest, we shall see what a Multitude of such Abuses have been reprobated, and what a prodigious Quantity of such noxious Weeds have been plucked up and cast forth from the Vineyard of the Lord. My chief and principal Design shall be then to set down with precision, what should be held as truly important in Christian Piety and Devotion, whether it be for the Substance thereof, or for the Means of acquiring, nourishing, and increasing it. Whoever seizes the Matter in this Light, and acts accordingly, will be truly devout. Without this we may appear perhaps to ourselves to be so, but most probably, or rather certainly, we shall not be such before God, nor in the Opinion and Judgment of the Wise.

C H A P.

CHAPTER II.

On Devotion towards God.

AS we have already said by the name of Devotion, we are to understand a reverential and affectionate Attachment of the Heart to Him who is above All, who has Prerogatives and Qualities worthy of Love, and is entirely disposed as well as all-powerful to befriend us in every Respect : These are Considerations which oblige us as rational Creatures to devote ourselves to his Service, to be quite solicitous to please Him and acquire his Love. We have on Earth Masters, Superiors, Patrons and Princes ; to these, or to some one or other of these Descriptions we devote our Services, and desire to captivate their good Will, through the persuasion and the hope of receiving some Benefits in return ; we love and respect them so much the more as we know them the more benevolent and worthy of Love. But what Prince of the Earth can ever be compared to God, so worthy of all Love in Himself, and from whom we hold our very Being, our Preservation, and every other Good we enjoy
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in this Life, besides the hopes of Enjoyments infinitely superior in the next? Thus Nature and Reason both instruct us that we owe, in the first place, before every other Consideration, the highest unlimited Devotion to the omnipotent Lord our God. *S. Ambrose* tells us that "this Virtue is the first in Rank and the Foundation of all others, and therefore God exacts it from us all without Distinction*." By which he understands the profession of the Service of our supreme Lord and Master to be such as to make his Will our own in every respect; that we may be always ready to avoid and abandon every thing whenever it appears that He so commands and desires it.

Now, for the Instruction of the Ignorant, and not indeed of the Learned who want not my endeavours in this way, it is first of all necessary to know well who is this God to whom every rational Creature owes the Tribute of all possible Devotion. It is but too true that although every Christian has frequently the holy Name of God in his Mouth, and but too many without the least Respect of the adorable Sanctity thereof, yet many are far from knowing him sufficiently, nor perhaps ever endeavour to compass this so necessary Knowledge. If you ask them, who is God? they will answer perhaps, our Lord Jesus Christ;

* *S. Ambrosius Lib. 1. Cap. 2. de Abrahamo.*

Christ ; because they often see the Images of him, and know that he exists and is adored under the sacramental Species of the Eucharist. More perhaps they cannot say ; and although they have learned when Children the Name of the most Holy Trinity, and name the Persons thereof every Day in making the Sign of the Cross, yet they do not properly understand what they say, nor raise their Thoughts so high as the nature of the Subject demands, confining all their Adoration and Invocation to the Person of Jesus Christ alone, who is certainly God as well as Man ; but they do not advert to the chief and capital Document of the Christian Faith, with regard to what concerns the divine Nature. For this kind of People I shall form an easy Mode of Reasoning on this head, void of the difficulties of learned Arguments. Would to God that not only Children, but many of the Adult, would apply themselves to a proper and serious Study of the Christian Doctrine : For at a tender Age the most important Truths are learned but in Words, with hardly any Idea of their Substance and Meaning ; whereas a more advanced Age and better use of Understanding are requisite, to know them well and turn them to a good and profitable Account.

I must now beg leave to give some easy, familiar Instructions of what the Church teaches on the above mentioned Matter, because that perhaps it may not be disagreeable
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or unnecessary to some of the Adult themselves.

Faith gives us to know that there is a God, Creator of all Things, one only God, eternal, increated, omnipotent, whose Will gave rise to whatever has a Being, whether visible or invisible; whose Providence governs, preserves and maintains them all. This is that God who in the Creed is stiled, "Maker of "Heaven and Earth," and we give him the Name of *Eternal Father*: This is He who has been known and adored for so many Ages by the Jewish People, and even by the Gentiles themselves, although these latter profaned and contaminated this sublime Knowledge by many different Fables, and an infinite variety of Superstitions. In the holy Books of the Old Testament God had given some Sign and Idea of having a Son, but this great Truth was afterwards fully revealed when the Son of God himself, descending from Heaven, took upon him our Flesh, and made himself Man for the Love of us poor Mortals, and taught us his own holy Law more perfect than the Old. From him it more clearly appeared that the divine Father had generated, but not created, from all Eternity, a Son of his own proper Nature and Substance, equal to himself entirely in this respect, whom after the Union of the Divine and Human Nature in his Person, we stile Jesus Christ our Lord, true God and true Man. It came
also

also to be revealed that from the Father and his consubstantial Son, through the ineffable Love which passes between them, there proceeded that Person whom we call the Holy Ghost, entirely equal in the Divinity to the Father and the Son, so that we believe and confess, that although there be but One only God in Essence and Substance, yet there are Three Persons therein contained. The Name of *Person* was adopted by the Holy Fathers, to distinguish the Son from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, but it must not be understood that this Word signifies in the Divinity, what we mean in our usual and common Language, as when we say, that *Peter, Paul and John*, are three different Persons. For it is not with God as with Man; and the Son of God means nothing else but the subsisting Wisdom, and the interior Word of the Father, and the Holy Ghost is no other but the Love which passes between the Father and the Son.

Let this short Instruction suffice with respect to a Mystery so great and so profound, in the Contemplation of which, the Strength of the most subtle and sublime Genius is absorbed and lost, as the Divinity is an Abyss of Majesty and Grandeur too far above all the Ideas of created Minds as long as we continue upon the Earth. With regard to the great Mass of the People, it is sufficient to believe in this so important and necessary Truth,

Truth, that is, One only God in three distinct Persons, and when they recite the Symbol of the Apostles, taught to us by the Church, they make a Profession of Faith, as to the high and adorable Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. The Recital of it is an humble Act of Faith without proud Disquisition or Inquiry, as even the most Learned are accustomed to do, and have the secret Intention of resting their Belief solely upon the divine Veracity, which has much Merit in the Sight of God; so that when we name God, when we pray to God to help us, when we call God to Witness of the Truth of what we alledge, we regularly intend to speak of the Trinity; that is, of that invisible omnipotent God who has created all things out of nothing, who is every where present, who in Heaven makes the Angels and Saints behold the Immenfity of his Glory, and desires to make us also happy in that his most delightful Kingdom. To this God who is our sovereign Lord and Master, our first, our chief and principal Good, we all ought, in the first place, infinitely before every other Object, to turn, direct and consecrate our Devotion, and this is necessary above all things for Salvation. This should consist in a holy Fear and Love of him. He, as infinitely good and holy, loves only Virtue, abhors Vice, commands that we should observe his Laws, which are immediately destructive thereof, and has both the Power

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and the Will to punish whoever is disobedient to him. There is then a Necessity to fear his Anger, not to provoke it to our Chastisement and Ruin. This Fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom, and even the Good and Holy have it through a principle of Duty. The Wicked cannot properly and in Justice say that they fear him, and if they do confess that they fear him, they do not certainly remember him, or impiously make but little account of him, in the heat of their irregular and disorderly Passions, or perhaps they imagine to themselves, with a rash presumptuous Confidence, they may regain his Favour whenever they think proper, when they grow tired and surfeited with their sinful Pursuits, whatever they may be, but until then indulge themselves without Bounds and tranquilly remain the Enemies of God.

Besides the Fear, the Love of God is above all things to take possession of the Heart of a Christian. The divine Commandment is well known: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, with "all thy Mind." Can we, or ought we to do less, if we consider but ever so little, who is this good Father and Master, this God endowed with so many amiable and stupendous Attributes? The Motives of loving him, and manifesting our true and heart-felt Love in Words, but more in Deeds, and of never offending him, are infinite. But of this Theme,
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so exceedingly vast and unutterably pleasing to Souls well-disposed, I shall only observe, that it is our Obligation to form Acts of the Love of God frequently on various occasions, and wise is the Person who has contracted a constant habit of this so holy an Exercise, it being an Action of very high Merit. It ought to be also ever present to our Minds, in order to excite ourselves the more strongly to love him, and faithfully observe his holy Law in all things, in which, (as we shall hereafter shew,) is chiefly and principally manifested the Love we bear him; That he has prepared for us an immense and unspeakable Reward worthy of his Greatness and Bounty, and infinitely superior to all our highest Deserts, that is his Paradise, a Kingdom of supreme Felicity, which shall also never suffer the least Diminution. Therefore we ought to love him, because through his infinite Perfections he is worthy in himself, and most justly exacts from all rational Creatures to be loved above all things; and we should likewise love him for our own Interests, since he has deigned to assure us, that he will recompense as a God, in a manner worthy of himself, that Love and Affection, which even without such a Declaration is certainly his due, and that Obedience to him and his Will, which all Servants are naturally bound to render to their Master. The chief
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and grand employment of our Devotion is then to adore God, especially when we are in his holy House, where he particularly gives Audience to his Faithful from his invisible Throne, by raising our Hearts and Minds to him, to acknowledge his supreme Dominion and Grandeur, his infinite Mercy, his unbounded Goodness and Beneficence, which are above all Degrees of any Comparison. We likewise ought to bless and praise him, to desire that all Creatures should give Glory to him and to have the constant habitual intention in all our Actions to please him and perform his Will, even in those which are in themselves indifferent as to Merit or Demerit, such as Work of any kind, eating, drinking, or going to repose, according to the Advice of *S. Paul*. It is for this Reason that the holy Church has taught us to make the Sign of the Cross so often, because by it we protest that we begin all our Operations in the Name of the most holy Trinity. The Church has also instructed us to glorify the great God frequently with this short Prayer, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." *Amen*. that is, so we wish, will, and desire it. But as wretched Sinners who have so many Accounts to settle with God, whose Sins, whether grievous or light, either utterly deform, or at least diminish the Beauty of our Souls, to whom shall we have recourse for Pardon? Certainly with all humble

ble Confidence to God, our kind and merciful Father, from whom alone we ought to seek it, as he alone can grant it, or else to his blessed Son, as we shall shew hereafter. Let us hear the Church, which at the Beginning of the sacred Mysteries, after the general Confession of the People, implores, by the Mouth and Ministry of the Priest, the divine Clemency in this Form: "May the Almighty
 " and Merciful God have Mercy on you,
 " and forgiving you your Sins bring you to
 " Life everlasting. Amen. May the Almighty
 " and Merciful Lord grant us the Pardon,
 " Absolution, and Remission of our Sins.
 " Amen." For which Reason, every time that we are about to form an Act of Repentance, before we confess our Sins to the Minister of God, we ought to bring to a lively remembrance, that God is every where, that he well knows and thoroughly understands the genuine native unaffected Language of the Heart, and then with this Language, or if we chuse in Words, also ever carefully united with the former, the Christian ought to acknowledge his Sins with internal heart-felt Emotions, detest them, and most sincerely grieve to have so grossly and outrageously offended a God, so great, so good, so worthy of all his Love, promising with ardent Faithfulness to be obedient and dutiful for the future. Provided that the Heart speaks in Earnest, few Words will be sufficient. To say only: "*I beg for*
 "*Mercy,*

“ *Mercy, oh Lord !* ” or, “ *Be propitious, oh God ! to me an unhappy Sinner,* ” will suffice to form an Act of true Contrition, to which the Faithful ought to accustom themselves on Account of the extreme Weakness and Frailty of human Nature. It is however better to make use of the Form which is taught in the Christian Doctrine, always remembering that the most efficacious Repentance ought to include the Love of God and our Grief for our Offences, not for the Love of ourselves, but for the Love of a Father and a Master who deserves it from all in a supreme and sovereign Degree. It is sufficiently clear and evident, that a vile Creature, who has been so horribly rash and impiously presumptuous, as to rebel against and grossly offend so great and good a Lord and Master, ought to appear before him and his sacred Minister, with all manner of Humility and of a sincere Sorrow for his past Offences, as likewise with a firm and solid Resolution not to transgress for the future. In the good and proper use of the Sacrament of Penance consists all the Foundation of the Hopes of a Sinner to regain his lost Right and Title to Paradise.

A Christian ought to imprint it deeply on his Mind that, besides the Son of God made Man (of whom we shall soon speak in particular) he is strictly oblig'd to acknowledge, adore and invoke his heavenly Father, and to
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give Glory to Him, together with the Son and the Holy Ghost. *S. Paul* reminds us of this Duty, when he says that we ought,
 “ *with one Mind and one Mouth to glorify God*
 “ *and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* ” *

And before the Apostle, the same Lord himself has explained to us, to whom, chiefly, principally, and in the first place our Prayers should be directed : “ *When thou shalt pray,*
 “ (says he,) *enter into thy Chamber, and hav-*
 “ *ing shut the Door, pray to thy Father in se-*
 “ *cret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will*
 “ *reward thee.*” § To this Almighty God, his Father, he enjoined us to address the most excellent of all Prayers, which is stiled that of the Lord, being composed by Jesus Christ himself : He elsewhere adds, that whatever we shall ask from this most bountiful Sovereign, in the Name of his blessed Son, we shall obtain it. The Church herself, for the most part, sends up her Supplications to the first Person of the Trinity, terminating them nevertheless with making mention of the Son, and the Holy Ghost, because her Intention is always to adore and glorify the entire most Holy Trinity. What then can be said of a Christian who hardly ever thinks of, or never adores and addresses his Prayers but to Jesus Christ exclusively and alone, thus entirely forgetting

* *S. Paul to the Romans, Chap. 15. V. 6.*

§ *S. Matthew, Chap. 6. V. 6.*

forgetting that so good heavenly Father, for whose Glory, not less than our Salvation, Christ himself descended from Heaven. It seems but reasonable then to decide upon the Whole, that our Devotion should chiefly and most commonly begin with, and take its Rise from God the Creator of all things, and then pass to the Man-God, Redeemer of Mankind, for thus it will flow in a more regular and orderly Course. We are to remark that, in honouring that most excellent Father whom we have in Heaven, we do not separate him from the Son and the Holy Ghost, consubstantial to, and coeternal with him; and our Heart must intend to render its Homage to God in three Persons, from whom we hold our Being, and every thing that is good, both spiritual and temporal, that we possess.

Thus much has been said for the Instruction of those who want it, as for those who have any Pretensions to Learning, it is not my Idea to think of furnishing them with any new Information.

CHAPTER III.

On Devotion towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

THERE is no Person among the Faithful, but ever so little instructed in the School of the Christian Doctrine, who knows
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not who is Jesus Christ, and does not profess a great Devotion to him. The ignorant part of the People cannot form a proper and just Idea of our supreme Lord God; that is, of the Most Holy Trinity, because God is an immense invisible Spirit, that falls not under the Cognizance of any of our Senses. Although to strive to accommodate this Idea thereto, the Pencil of the Painter has been sometimes employed to furnish out a visible Representation thereof, by describing the Father as a venerable old Man who holds the World in his Hand, and the Holy Ghost as a Dove; yet such Figures are quite too far removed from the Idea of God, because the Eternal Father in nothing resembles any created visible object, nor is he old, or has human Limbs, and the divine Spirit, although he has been seen to appear as a Dove, or in fiery Tongues, yet his Essence has nothing in common with either, not the least Resemblance to our earthly Objects. But as for the second Person of the Trinity, that is, the Son of God being made really and truly Man, in beholding his Image or Picture, whether as an Infant or an Adult, or in his Crucifixion, even the most unlettered conceive him for what he certainly is, and if they behold not his Divinity, by means at least of any such Representation of his human Nature, they know that it exhibits to their View Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, the Redeem-

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er and Saviour of the World. Now it must be admitted that the Devotion of a Christian towards him is not only one of the most important Duties and Obligations, but even a necessary means to obtain Life everlasting in Heaven. Let us turn our Eyes upon the wonderful Actions of this so good, so kind a Saviour, performed during the Time of his visible Appearance and Conversation among Men upon Earth. Let us revolve in our Minds his so many Sufferings, and chiefly his Passion and Death on the Cross. For what, or for whom, was all this? Certainly for us alone; for he, as God most glorious by his Nature, as Man most innocent, had no Right to labour or suffer for himself. Now is it possible, if we have the least Spark of Gratitude, that we can forbear from professing a great Love, and not less Respect and Reverence, for this blessed Lord, who has testified, and ever continues to testify, so great a Love for us?

It is here necessary to observe, that whatever spiritual Good a Christian Soul possesses ought certainly to be attributed to the Author of Grace, that is, to Jesus Christ. It is he who, by the salutary Waters of his Baptism, washes away the destructive Stain of original Sin, and from being born *the Children of Wrath*, renders us the adopted Children of God himself: It is he who, if we commit Sin, either through Frailty or Malice, and repent of, and detest our Transgressions, makes a

Treaty of Peace between his divine Father and us with procuring our Pardon. For which Reason he is the only true Mediator (in the strict Sense of the Word) between God and Man. When he shews to his eternal Father the infinitely precious Blood which was all shed for us, and for our Sake alone, there is nothing which he cannot obtain for, and dispense to, his Followers: Moreover, as he was the first who opened Paradise, shut and closed before him, to all Mankind, so he still holds the Keys thereof; we shall not be permitted to enter therein, we shall not be saved but through the Means of Jesus Christ, but by the infinite Merits of the Lamb of God, which can alone supply and atone for our Demerits. For which Reason to him was given, and to him alone belongs, the Name of Saviour, a Name that should fill all our Hearts with inexpressible Love, and at the same time make us well understand the continual incessant Obligation we have to recommend ourselves to him, to bear him the most ardent Affection, and to place all imaginable Confidence in our Devotion towards him. In fine, Jesus Christ is to be our Help, and all our true well-founded Hope must proceed from him. What is it he cannot do, as being true God consubstantial with his Father? But even as Man, all things are possible to him,

him, as we know from the Gospel * that his divine Father has put every thing into his Hands, and conferred all Power upon him in Heaven and on Earth.

We may therefore, even in a direct manner, send up our Supplications to this divine Saviour, that he may pardon and forgive us, and give us the Absolution of our Sins, because he enjoys this Authority, and the Church instructs us so in many places. Nevertheless, our more common and familiar method ought to be (as we have already observed) to implore upon us the Mercy of his Father, who is likewise our Father by Adoption, and this always through the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are the efficacious Means to obtain every Grace and Favour from the Giver of all Good. But when indeed we present ourselves before Christ in the most blessed Sacrament, to adore him, and to partake of this most precious of all his Gifts; because, at that Time, we treat directly and immediately with himself, who deigns to erect his Throne therein, and comes with so much Love, such prodigious Condescension into our own House; then, indeed, is the Time and Place most proper to supplicate himself to heal our Infirmities, to fortify our Spirit in the way of Salvation, and to grant us every Grace that is necessary for our

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Weakness

* *S. Matthew, Chap. 11. V. 27. and C 28. V. 18.*

Weakness and spiritual Indigence. Who is the Person, who, considering the astonishing Goodness of this Man-God, so fond and so enamoured of us, who after having spilled all his Blood to purchase our Pardon, and save us from utter and eternal Ruin, goes always in search of Sinners, and condescends to take up his Dwelling really and truly in us, poor wretched Creatures, not worthy certainly of so signal, so prodigious a Favour ; who is the Person, I say, who, upon due Consideration of all this, can possibly refrain from loving, with the most grateful Affection, so wonderful a Patron and Benefactor ? The Apostle *S. Paul* has fulminated an Excommunication against *whoever does not love the Lord Jesus Christ !* It is necessary then to lay down, as one of the first Principles of our holy Religion, that it is an essential Obligation and Duty of a Christian, to have a true Devotion, not only towards God, the omnipotent invisible Creator and Lord of all things, but also towards our divine Saviour ; that is, in the Fear, Love and Obedience to him, who has created and maintains us on the Earth, and to that Man-God, who redeemed us at the Expence of his Life upon the Cross, who has displayed and facilitated to us, the Path to Paradise, and disdains not to feed us, to the end of Life, with his own most precious Body and Blood, in order to strengthen us in the pursuit of our Journey towards
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the Kingdom of Heaven. This grand Object is not attainable without this peculiar Species of Devotion, and with it we can all be saved, always supposing a due Obedience to the Commandments of God and the Church.

This particular Devotion towards our Redeemer, being then so very important and necessary for a Christian, the motive is sufficiently clear of the eagerness with which it is prescribed and enjoined by spiritual Directors, exhorting us not merely to a superficial Devotion, such as adorning his Images, burning Lamps or Candles before any Representation of him, or such like Signs of Piety, which in themselves solely are untubstantial; but certainly, indeed, to that solid Devotion, that both internally as well as externally, is due to this incomparable Saviour. Our external Devotion towards Jesus Christ ought chiefly to consist in an humble and affectionate Veneration of him in the blessed Sacrament, whether he be exposed to the public Adoration of the Faithful in his holy House, or majestically conducted in solemn Processions, or brought as a *Viaticum* for the Sick. It is, indeed, our Duty, that when this King of Kings appears in Person, we should all fly to shew him all imaginable Respect and Honour, we his poor Servants entirely dependant on him. Besides, the Merit of this respectful and affectionate Eagerness towards

the Presence of so loving a Sovereign, our Prayers will be then the more acceptable to obtain Favours from his unlimited Goodness and Bounty. We shall, in the second Place, demonstrate our interior Devotion, without which the exterior would be but of little Value, when we carefully study the wonderful Life of our Redeemer, his heavenly Documents and Instructions, all full of Charity and Wisdom, and chiefly his Passion and Death, which are the grand Testimonies of his unspeakable Love for us. On the Consideration of all that the Son of God, as Man, has suffered for our Sake, how must the Hearts of us miserable Sinners be affected, if we but reflect properly, that our Transgressions were the occasion of all his Torments and Death, and that he offered himself up, a most pure and holy Victim, to his eternal Father to incline him to shew us Mercy, and save us from eternal Destruction. Such a serious Consideration, so awful in itself, should surely excite in us, the utmost Horror and Grief for our past Offences, and a firm Resolution to avoid them for the future. If we thoroughly weigh in our Minds the Sufferings of Christ, there is no Reflection that can console us more fully, and induce us more powerfully to a quiet, perfect Resignation to the divine Will or Permission, in any Tribulations or Adversities whatsoever, than the Consideration of the incomparably greater

er Afflictions our blessed Saviour has endured for the Love of us, and with such unparalleled Patience and Meekness. He, with all his heavenly Innocence, has suffered so much, and shall we, wretched Sinners, repine and murmur under such a Cross, so much lighter than his? For this Reason *S. Paul* requested, that *the Lord should direct our Hearts in the Charity of God, and the Patience of Christ.** Besides that our Lord himself has declared; *He that taketh not up his Cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.** It is certain, that one of the surest means to attest our Devotion and Love to our divine Saviour, is to suffer willingly for his Sake. How much the more we shall suffer to accompany Jesus Christ in his Passion, so much the greater Merit we shall acquire to arrive to the Possession of his Kingdom.

In the second place, our internal Devotion to our blessed Saviour ought to blaze forth when we are about to assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass, or to approach his sacred Table. There is not wanting surely any Instrument to this, for whosoever well considers and understands the sublime Grant of this Action, for which the holy Angels themselves envy (as I may say) the fortunate Condition of Man. It will be sufficient

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* *His 2d Epist. to the Thessalonians, C. 3 l. V. 5th.*

† *S. Matthew, C. 10. V. 38.*

ficient only to recollect, that the Great Lord and Master of All condescends to come in Person to the House of one of his meanest Servants. Why this extraordinary Condescension? To inspire him with the Love of him, to unite himself entirely with him, to fortify him with Courage and Resolution in the Paths of Sanctity and Righteousness, that he may be thereby enabled to, attain to eternal Felicity in the next Life. *If any Man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever ;* that is, in the Possession of celestial Bliss, are his own Words : *And of this Life,* (he likewise tells us,) *he shall be deprived, that eateth not the Flesh, and drinketh not the Blood, of the Son of Man.* A God of infinite unspeakable Love for us could not possibly do more to manifest it. Now if we reflect but ever so little upon this astonishing Condescension of the Son of God, when he stoops so very low to gain our Hearts, and confer upon us all possible Graces and Favours, what is it we should not do in return? and yet how little do we exert ourselves to profit by it? Such frequent Communion, and no Advancement in the way of the Spirit, where must Fault lie but on our Side? Certain it is, that on receiving this so kind and bountiful a God, our hearts ought indispensably to break forth into

• S. John, Chap. 6. Ver. 52.

into Acts of the highest Love, into the most lively Expressions of Thanksgiving, the most sincere and fullest Acknowledgment of our own Weakness and Misery, if left to ourselves, in order to supplicate him for the so salutary Aid of his divine Grace, so necessary to us at every Moment, to do Good and avoid the Commission of Evil. At that happy Moment, whoever knows not in what manner to address the sovereign Dispenser of all good Things, may furnish himself with many proper efficacious Prayers, composed by learned and fervent Servants of God, which being recited with Attention, and accompanied by the Heart, will very well answer the present Necessity. In fine, this is the most fit and convenient time of all to manifest to our divine Saviour, whether we truly love him, and our Devotion towards him, be solid and real, as also to obtain every Aid to sustain our native Weakness. And if we abstain from certain Sins, but too natural to the Corruption of Man, it should be attributed, in a special manner, to that God of all Purity, who, coming to reside within us, renders us bold and vigorous in the Resistance of Temptations so easily met with, and so very frequent during the Course of the present Life. I shall conclude with observing, that the solid interior Devotion to Jesus Christ consists in good Works, and in refraining

refraining from Sin, through the Motive of the Love of him. It was chiefly for this that the Son of God descended from Heaven to give his Life to gain our Love, and work our Redemption, being desirous to form for himself *a People acceptable, a Pursuer of good Works.** Wherefore he has clearly assured us, that it is not sufficient to say, *Lord! Lord!* to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. He, indeed, shall enter therein, who does the Will of his heavenly Father. But of this we shall speak more particularly in a little time. In the mean time I would say, that in the Love of God and our Neighbour, and in our Veneration of, and Confidence in, the Mediator between God and Man, Jesus Christ, consists the primary, the essential, and I would almost say, all the solid Devotion and Piety of Christians. This is the grand Devotion that is prescribed to us in the sacred Books of the New Law, inculcated by the Saints, and recommended as such at this Day by all enlightened spiritual Directors. With this the Christian may be saved, without it no other Mode can supply its Place. Consequently, if any of the Faithful should spend *all* the Zeal and Fervour of their Devotion, on what is only a Matter of *Counsel*, at the same time neglecting what is much more important, as
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* To Titus, Chap. 2. Ver. 14.

being a Matter of *Precept*, *necessary* of course to our Salvation, such Persons would certainly disturb and even overturn the beautiful Order, Regularity and Oeconomy of the Religion of Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

On Devotion towards the Holy Ghost.

WHOEVER has the least Tincture of the Elements of the Christian Doctrine, and making every Day the Sign of the Cross, names the Persons of the most Holy Trinity, or recites the *Glory be to the Father*, &c. does not want to be informed that, the Holy Ghost is the third of the three Divine Persons, omnipotent, increated, adorable, equally with the Father and the Son, from whom he proceeds, and with whom he is consubstantial. The Church, indeed, does not prescribe any Obligation of a certain particular and distinct Devotion to this Divine Spirit, because in the Invocation, Adoration, and Love of God, our Intention should always extend our Worship, Attachment, and our Supplications of every Kind, to the entire most Holy Trinity. Nevertheless, who
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is there that will not allow and confess, that it is exceedingly just, proper, and worthy our Attention, to reflect a little more than we usually do, on the wonderful Operations which the divine Scriptures attribute to him, on the so signal Benefits that are diffused from him among Christians, in order to be convinced how laudable and useful would be some fixed and determinate Species of Devotion towards the PARACLETE, for thus also is the Holy Ghost called, that is, the *Comforter* of the Faithful? Among the principal Actions of God, with regard to us poor Mortals, the Incarnation of his Son is certainly to occupy a great and capital Place: Now, the execution of this wonderful Design, was expressly consigned to the Holy Ghost, as we learn from the Gospel. The holy Apostles and Disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, afterwards, knew and experienced the astonishing Extent of his Strength and Power. They had, for a long Time, conversed with their divine Master, seen so many of his Miracles, heard so much of his heavenly Doctrines, and yet there was not hitherto perceived in them that vigorous Faith, that active Force of Love, that invincibly impels to great and sublime Actions, and even to a Contempt of Death itself. But the Redeemer had scarcely ascended into Heaven and sent them, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost, in the Form of Tongues of Fire, than they

they all, from rude and ignorant Fishermen, were changed, in an Instant, into wonderful and indefatigable Preachers of the Religion of Christ, and braved, with dauntless Intrepidity, all manner of Persecutions, Sufferings, and Death itself, confirming, with their Blood, the Truth of what they announced to so many Nations. Our Lord had foretold to them, that as this divine Spirit had heretofore instructed the Prophets, and spoken by their Mouth, so, in like manner, would he instruct them, wonderfully invigorate in them, the Documents formerly given them, and serve to glorify still more himself, the Saviour of Mankind. In like manner, because the holy Martyrs were full of this heavenly Fire, they feared not the most horrible Torments of Tyrants, and so many Confessors and Virgins kept themselves, with the most unwearied Vigilance, in the Paths of Sanctity. Another stupendous Proof of the divine Goodness towards us, is the inefable Sacrament of the Altar, where the Bread and Wine are really and truly converted into the Body and Blood of the Son of God made Man : It is certain, indeed, that this Prodigy is operated by the efficacious Words of himself, our Lord and Master ; but, nevertheless, the Church justly believes, that the powerful Influence of the Holy Ghost concurs likewise therein, which she invokes for this End to descend upon her Gifts.

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Above all, when we are adopted by Baptism to be the Children of God, there is no doubt that this divine Spirit is given to us, and takes up his Residence in our Souls, in order to confer upon us the three heavenly Virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity. We are informed from Scripture that *the Charity (or Love) of God is diffused in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, who has been given to us*, that is, in the regeneration of Baptism. For which Reason, He himself bears the Name of *Love*; so that it is from this divine Spirit that we are especially to implore, and hope for the greatest Requisite of a Christian Life, which is the Love of God. He who truly feels this Love in his Heart, and earnestly wishes that God were sincerely loved by all, fears nothing more than to displease him, and from this State of Mind knows whether the Holy Ghost truly abides in him. We know besides, that from this divine Love proceed holy Inspirations, and are distributed among Christians various Gifts and Graces, that serve to form, or to perfect our spiritual Life: such are Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, the Fear of God, and other Gifts, enumerated in the Christian Doctrine, which he is continually imparting to the Faithful, according as it pleases him, sometimes all together, at other times in part. Knowledge if not accompanied by the Spirit of God does not render us good; nay, may even ea

sily pervert us, and make us lose even the Light of Faith. Besides which, as *S. Augustine* has remarked, (with whom the divine Word is in perfect Agreement,) the Remission of our Sins properly appertains to the Holy Ghost, who is called for this Reason, the Sanctifier, because from him particularly we are to expect Sanctification, and every interior Grace, although to all that we have said, the enire most holy Trinity always certainly concurs in perfect Concord and Agreement. Finally, we ought to venerate and adore the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Truth, and therefore the Master and Protector of the Catholic Church, as the internal Comforter and Counsellor of all good Christians, and as our powerful Auxiliary and Defender, amidst all the Temptations, Crosses, and Trials of the present Life.

This little Tincture of the general Heads of all that could be said of the third Person of the Trinity, ought to be sufficient to give us to understand the Nature of that solid, laudable, and useful Devotion, which every Christian should profess towards the Holy Ghost. He is truly praise-worthy who counsels and promotes it. And we all stand in Need of it, because that quite a different Spirit and Counsellor dwells within us, even from the Womb, entirely opposed to that most blessed and divine Spirit that reigns in Heaven, and diffuses also upon Earth, the
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happy Influence of his Light. The Spirit of Concupiscence, (taken in its universal Sense,) is our natural Spirit, and bears likewise the name of Love, but of a mean terrestrial Love, which only inclines us to Objects unworthy of us, and to irregular, shameful Desires, so as to make us frequently forget God, and Heaven, our native Country, as likewise to incur the Anger of God, our Father, and to be justly stigmatized in human Society. Behold therefore the Necessity for every one of us to invoke the Spirit of God, that he may not only come to speak in our Hearts against the Spirit of artful Seduction, by inspiring us not only with the Love of moral Good, and the Abhorrence of Evil, but to render likewise the Practice of Virtue easy, sweet, and pleasant to us, as also to cry out aloud to us, when we are upon the Point of yielding to the Attacks of Temptation: It is highly necessary in like manner, that this divine Spirit should strengthen our Faith to believe, with a lively Conviction, the Precepts and Documents of Religion, and all the Mysteries thereof, by dissipating any Doubts which may proceed either from our Ignorance, or from the Pride and Haughtiness of meer human Reason: We may beseech the eternal Father, or his blessed Son, that he may send him to us; we can also send up our Petitions immediately to that holy Origin of divine Love, that he

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may kindle in us that celestial Fire that has produced, and still produces, so many Saints, and without which we cannot arrive to their Kingdom. It is true, that in Baptism, and in Confirmation, the Spirit of God is conferred upon us, but how have we afterwards preserved it? What is worse, we hardly ever think of him, and of all the immense Benefits he can bring along with him, nor do we take any Pains to regain the Presence of so excellent an internal Master, although our Lord Jesus Christ has assured us, that his heavenly Father will grant this divine Spirit with the same Facility as a Man gives Bread to his Children. I shall say no more of him in this Place, but I would strenuously advise the frequent Repetition of that beautiful Prayer with which the Church invokes this divine Comforter on the Feast of Pentecost, to those who understand Latin; and which, for those who do not, is in Substance as follows, in the English Tongue.

Come, Oh Holy Spirit! fill the Hearts of thy Faithful, and kindle in them the Fire of thy Love. Come, oh Holy Spirit! and shed from the Heavens the Rays of thy Light upon us. Come, oh Father of the Poor! Descend, oh Giver of all Good. Come, oh inward Enlightener of Hearts! Thou who art the best of Comforters. Delightful Guest! The sweetest Joy, Peace and Comfort of those happy Souls wherein thou comest to reside. Oh Thou in whom the Weary find Repose, those in the turbulent State of Temptation a strong Supporter,

Supporter, the Afflicted a soothing Friend and Comforter ! Oh most blessed Light ! fill the entire Capacity of the Hearts of thy Faithful ! for without thy Assistance there is nothing of what is truly good in Man, too prone of himself to what is Evil. Wash and purify us, so much defiled by our strict Attachment to worldly Pleasures : Awaken in us the almost extinct Love of God and of Devotion : Heal the Wounds of our Souls, which are but too many, and often renewed by us : It is Thou who canst conquer our Obstinacy, and deliver us from that spiritual Sloth and Lukewarmness which we feel in ourselves, to correct our Wanderings, and our Irregularities of every Kind. Ah ! Grant to thy Faithful, who repose their Hopes in Thee, thy Seven invaluable Gifts ! Animate us with holy Inspirations, to acquire a Treasure of Merits by the Practice of all the Virtues : Grant to us a Perseverance therein, even to the End of Life ; and crown hereafter all thy own Graces, by conferring upon us, that unspeakable Bliss and Glory which thy good Servants now, and for ever shall, enjoy, in the full Possession of thy Paradise. Amen.

C H A P.



CHAPTER V.

*On the chief and primary Requisite of Devotion,
consisting in good Works.*

IT is now time to enquire after what manner we are to make known our Devotion to God ; that is to say, that holy Love and Fear, which we are bound, with true internal Feelings corresponding thereto, to have and profess for Him. It is certain, that in the ordinary Commerce of the World, our Actions, much more than our Words, demonstrate, with greater force of Evidence, that just Respect and Attachment to those who are, at the same time, our Superiors and our Benefactors, to which they lay so due and proper a Claim. For which reason, if we have a mind to know with Certainty, the real and genuine Nature of our Devotion and Love of God, we are in the first place and above all things, to look into our Works with regard to God, as they ought to be precisely such as he requires at our Hands ; that is, truly good and virtuous, in Concord with his holy Law, with a Dislike and Abhorrence to whatever we know to be forbidden by him,
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and with the constant Practice of whatever, we are likewise convinced, is commanded by and acceptable to him. This is the grand and true Test to prove, whether we possess a real and solid, or only a meer external, fictitious and hypocritical, Respect and Love for the Lord our God. Our divine Master assured us of this, when he said; *He that bath my Commandments and keepeth them, He it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.** How then should it happen, that if we sincerely confess God to be our sovereign Master, we should be so rash as to disgust and offend him? And if we acknowledge him with our Hearts to be our Father, what strange and unnatural Children are we, not to shew a proper Return of Attachment, by a cordial Love of so good a Father? Can we say or think but for a Moment, that he, who is the Source of all Good to us, does not deserve our Love? Certainly, as he is holy, just and merciful, and possessing every other imaginable Perfection, he can never be pleased with those of his Children who are so very unlike himself, when they give themselves up to Iniquity, to Injustice, who have no Mercy for their Neighbour, and giving way to the blind Impulses of their earthly Concupiscence, degrade themselves so far from their Rank and Dignity, as to put themselves on a Level with Beasts; when

* S. John, Chap. 14. Ver. 21.

when he had formed us so far their Superior, by creating us according to his own Image and Likeness, and endowing us with the so noble and dignifying Gift of Reason. On which Account, if he should chastise us in this, as he certainly will in another Life, without true Repentance on our Part, for so much Disobedience and insolent Contempt, of his Laws, of what, or whom, can we justly complain, but of ourselves alone?

The Consideration should never escape our Mind, that this Great God does not at all stand in Need of us, nor of our Works, as he is assuredly most happy of himself without us, and that if he sends us into the World, and prescribes for us what we ought to do, and what we ought to avoid, his Aim is to render us also truly, and not deceitfully, happy. One of the principal Reasons for which the Religion of Christ may be fully known to have descended from Heaven, and which is soon clearly seen by every one who knows how to reflect upon what is truly good, becoming and beautifully regular in human Affairs, is the moral Doctrine, or the wise and truly rational Mode of employing our Existence in this Life, which the blessed Son of God, by his own Mouth, and by that of the Apostles, well and thoroughly instructed by him, has inculcated to us. The Whole breathes nothing but Wisdom, Justice, and Charity, to procure that Peace and Serenity of Mind, unruffled by the restless Madness
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of the Passions, which is surely the most desirable Happiness of this Life, and to make us live in a smooth, pleasing and delightful Concord and Harmony with our Fellow-creatures, by the means of that kind brotherly Love which he has so strongly recommended and commanded. Let us here admire his infinite Goodness, that he looks upon such Works, although exacted by even him for our own *temporal* Advantage, as proofs of that Love which we profess to him, and in order to animate us the more to fly from what is destructive to our *present* Happiness, and embrace whatever tends to promote and increase it; He has also prepared, proposed, and promised an unspeakable Reward to whoever shall keep his Commandments; that is, Paradise; a Kingdom of every inconceivable Joy and Delight; a Kingdom that shall last for all Eternity. This is a Truth we firmly believe, and indeed, right Reason alone is sufficient to convince us of it. For the sovereign Lord of All, being a God of infinite Justice, cannot leave the Just without Recompense, nor the Wicked without Punishment. This World is not the Place in which Justice is exactly exercised, where the Virtuous and the Vicious always receive that which is strictly due to their different respective Conduct. The God of all Justice reserves this for another World, wherein this shall be fully and entirely manifested, to the inexpressible Glory of the former,

mer, and Confusion of the latter. We are All on our way to this other World, and every Soul will arrive thereto, immediately after the short Pilgrimage of this present Life. It is certain, that it is there that God will ascertain, with the nicest and most exact Precision, the Merits and Demerits of every Individual of Mankind, a Truth of which the Son of God has so positively assured us, authenticating his heavenly Doctrine by such a Number of Miracles and Prodigies, which forms at the same time the chief Incentive to Virtue, and the grand and principal Consolation of the Good and Virtuous. After Death they shall then enter into the Joy of their Lord; they shall possess the Kingdom prepared for them, a Kingdom of such Magnificence and Grandeur, that, as *S. Paul* has assured us, *The Eye has not seen, nor the Ear heard, neither has it ever entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Greatness and Immensity thereof.* The Good should animate themselves frequently to an incessant Perseverance in their pious Labours, with these Words of the Psalmist; *Oh how great is the Multitude of thy Sweetness, oh Lord, which thou hast bidden for them that fear Thee! which Thou hast wrought for them that hope in Thee*!* We have the so comfortable promise, that we shall be admitted to behold God, the Fountain of all Good,

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* Psalm 30. Ver. 20.

without any Veil or Obstruction, and we shall dwell for all Eternity in the City of God, without any the least Disgust of Satiety, in Company with the Saints, and in that Palace where he wonderfully resides in all his Glory, and where alone all Good is to be found, with an entire and utter Exclusion of all Evil. Let us then be animated with the most fervent Courage to acquire so blissful and glorious a State of Residence. If we obtain it, *We shall always be with God,** as the Apostle has told us, than which no greater Felicity can be imagined. That blessed Day will come, yes, it will arrive, when we shall behold those delightful Promises realized and fulfilled; and while we know that there is a God who has undertaken to recompense us for all that we shall have done, through Obedience and Love of him, let us be instantly convinced, that so generous and omnipotent a Lord, will certainly be willing, and well knows in what manner, to reward us proportionally to the Extent of his Goodness, Power and Glory.

The Lord therefore whom we serve exacts good Works from us, the first and principal of which, is to abstain from those that are bad. He might, indeed, had it so pleased him, save us all, without any Exertion on our part, as he does Children, who being regenerated by Baptism, depart this Life in their infant

* 1st to the Thessalonians, Chap. 4. Ver. 17.

infant Innocence. But when the Christian attains the Use of Reason, he wills and commands that he should labour for the Acquisition of an eternal Reward, and that by the good Use of Free-Will co-operating with his Grace, he might gain Life everlasting: This is to be, indeed, considered as his Gift, and at the same time meritorious in us, and as a Recompense to him who has made a right and proper use of his Grace. We see in the Gospel, in what manner the Father of the Family liberally grants and dispenses his Talents; that is, the Treasures of his Grace among his Servants. We there also behold, that if they on their part do not apply themselves to turn them to Advantage, he chastizes them, and rejects them as useless Servants, who have betrayed his Intentions. He, on the contrary, is highly fortunate, who presents himself before him with the due Gains and Profit arising from the Talents committed to his Care and Management. Then, with Pleasure, his Master gives him the Name of a good and faithful Servant, and introduces him to all the Joys and Happiness of his blissful Residence. But what if a Servant, far from turning to a truly good Account the Treasures of his Master, should squander them in an endless Variety of luxurious and vicious Pursuits? Should the Punishment of so much Ingratitude and Iniquity be taxed with Injustice? It is certain, that the good Works of a Christi-

an, and even those which are in their own nature indifferent, if performed in Charity; that is, in the State of Grace, and through the Love of God, are justly to be called meritorious of Life everlasting. Not, indeed, that Man, by his own Strength and Power, can merit any thing in the Sight of God, but because, that by the Assistance of Divine Grace, which lies open to all, we become capable of performing Actions which are pleasing to him. And he, through his infinite Condescension and Goodness, has established an Agreement with his faithful Servant, that he will abundantly reward him, when by those Works which are pleasing to him, he shall prove and make known his Obedience and Love. The Apostles, as yet not thoroughly instructed, once addressed themselves to Jesus Christ in this manner: "Behold, we have left all things and followed Thee; what therefore shall we have*?" Our Lord immediately answered, That they, and all who should do the Will of his heavenly Father, should receive "Life everlasting." And in another Place, in order to give Encouragement to the Humble, to those in Tribulation, to the Merciful, and to all who perform good, holy and virtuous Works, He promises them the Kingdom of Heaven, and the beatific Vision of God, concluding

* *S. Matthew, Chap. 19. Ver. 27.*

cluding with those Words, "Be glad and rejoice, for your Reward is very great in Heaven*." Of this *Reward* and *Recompense* the holy Scriptures speak in many Places; and Christ, when Judge, and we are all summoned before his tremendous Tribunal, will then, in a special manner, give us to know that Man acquires, or may acquire, *Merit* here on Earth, by Works proceeding from Charity and Mercy, because on account of these our Lord will protest, that he grants the Possession of his Kingdom to his good Servants. God is Truth itself, God is the faithful Observer and Maintainer of his Word.

Whoever then desires and hopes in time to enjoy that unspeakable Bliss, which God reserves for those who are dear to him, behold the only way that can conduct them thither. Our Devotion, that is to say, an holy Fear and Love of God, ought to consist in those Actions which we know are pleasing to him, and in carefully performing them in every Instance, with the Intention of manifesting our Obedience and our Love, because that without such an Intention, our Works would not cease indeed to be *morally* good, but then they would not be meritorious of a Reward in the Life to come. Let our Works then be thoroughly good, the first and chief of which, is to preserve ourselves free from Sin, by the

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* S. Matthew, Chap. 5. Ver. 12.

faithful Observance of the Commandments of God, and of what is universally prescribed to us by the Wisdom of our holy Mother the Church. Here it may be asked, whether it be lawful and proper for the Christian to place the Hope of his Salvation in the Performance of these good Works? To which I answer, that we ought in this to follow the Example of the Saints, who, although they incessantly studied to operate things pleasing to God, in the Practice of the most sublime and beautiful Virtues; although it be certain, that *Merit* is really acquired by good Works, and that God will reward his faithful Servants, even through a Principle of Justice, yet did they not found the Hopes of their Salvation on them, but on the infinite Goodness of God, the Father of Mercies, and on the boundless Merits of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ. This Sentiment ought to be deeply impressed upon our Hearts, for this important Reason, that a true Christian should ever, and in all Circumstances, preserve the so necessary Virtue of holy Humility, and avoid nothing so much as the smallest Incentive to Pride; nor is it at all proper and reasonable for us wretched Creatures to glory in ourselves, as we should glory only and solely in the Lord. Thus precisely have the Saints conducted themselves, and although they knew full well that our free Will concurs towards the Performance of good Works, for which Reason Merit is ascribed

cribed to them, yet they likewise well knew, that God had a greater Share therein, by supplying us with the Aid of his heavenly Grace. Without this Aid we could not certainly, with our own proper Strength, operate any thing truly useful and conducive to our eternal Salvation; and with it, on the other hand, our Works immediately become truly good and *meritorious* for the Life to come; so that the Glory of these good Fruits is in a special manner due to the Power of the Grace of God. On this head it seems strange that, in these latter Ages, the Opinion should be adopted against the Catholic Church, that Faith alone, and simply as such, should suffice, with respect to the Adult, for Salvation, and the Concomitance of good Works not at all requisite thereto. But many have upon better Consideration rejected this strange Idea. It is evident from the sacred Writings of both the Old and New Testament, that God obliges us to the Performance of holy Works, and has afterwards pledged his Word, that he will confer eternal Happiness as the *Reward* of them, he being most eminently a just and righteous Judge. Our Saviour being interrogated as to what should be done to gain Life everlasting? did not answer, "*Go and believe,*" but, "*If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the* Commandments;*" And *S. Paul* has given

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* *S. Matthew, Chap. 19. Ver. 17.*

us to understand, that “ *in doing Good we should not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not fainting.** ” The Lord in the Apocalypse assures us, “ *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to render to every Man according to his Works. §* ” Even a Cup of Water given for the Love of God to a poor Person, will have from him a Reward in Heaven. There are many Passages in the Scriptures to the same Purpose. It follows then of course, that the Faith of the adult Christian, ought to be a Faith *operating* in Charity, in the Persuasion, that the more Good he shall do, so much the stronger may his hope be of acquiring eternal Beatitude; and that greater shall be the Reward of all his Labours.



CHAPTER VI.

That the Foundation of the Theological Virtues is necessary for the Performance of good Works.

BY the Name of good Works we understand, as has been already said, as much to abstain from Evil as to do Good, with the
Intention

* Gal. C. 6. V. 9.

§ Apoc. C. 22. V. 12.

Intention in both Respects to please God, and to attest to him our Love, our Obedience, and our Gratitude. The first and primary Lesson of a Christian is to avoid Sin; that is, not to disobey God in the things which he and his Church, our holy Mother, has commanded. Whoever compasses this shall be saved. In the second place, the Treasure of good Works is increased by Acts of all the *moral Virtues*, exhibited to us in the holy Scriptures, and explained and recommended by the holy Fathers, and by all those pious Writers who have, in many ways and manners, held forth to View, the Rules and the Perfection of the Life of the true Christian. Of these Acts of Virtue some are commanded by God, and others are of Counsel. The genuine Christian applies himself to the practice of both, being always mindful that he is placed here below, not to remain for ever, but for a short time, and always travelling towards another Country, where he is to fix his everlasting Abode. Wise and happy is he who exerts himself to the uttermost to deserve to obtain a favourable Reception there. Of these Virtues great things may be said, and Divines treat of them very diffusively, by founding thereupon the most subtle Questions and sublime Reasonings: But all the Theology, as well of the Learned as of the Ignorant, is reduced in the End to this single Point; that is, to the *Performance* of those

Actions which are pleasing to God. Meer Knowledge will not certainly save us : On the contrary, a more severe Account will be exacted of those, all whose Application and Study terminate in a vain Pomp of Leaves without Fruit, which will be still worse, if with so clear and ample a Knowledge of what God has revealed and requires from us, they operate quite the contrary. In fine, he alone is truly wise and learned, who, although he be not conversant in Literature, yet, firmly believing the Truths which the Church teaches, puts them carefully in practice, with an Abhorrence of all sinful Actions, and attaching himself solely to those which have the Approbation of God.

It is now necessary to pay Attention to the Source and Spring from whence Works proceed, so laudable and so pleasing to God. There are three Virtues taught to us by the holy Doctrine of Christ, upon which ignorant and careless Christians should diligently reflect and meditate : These are the three *Theological* ; *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*. They are *supernatural* and *divine* Virtues ; that is, not acquired by us and by our own Strength, but mercifully infused in our Souls by the Goodness of God. These are the Mines which produce the pure Gold of good Works, and of moral Virtues ; so that, in proportion to the greater or lesser Power they possess in the Heart of a Christian, he operates more or less
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of those Actions which can be thoroughly acceptable to God. If they should happen to be languid, or, which is worse, if they should be, as it were, dead in our Hearts, we not only never operate what is Good, but easily give ourselves up to Evil, because then corrupt Nature enjoys a sovereign Sway, to gratify every vicious Propensity, and thus we account, as little or nothing, the holy Will of God : For which Reason, the first thing we should attend to is, to examine with the most serious Discussion, and without flattering ourselves, what Power these most important and essential Virtues possess in our Hearts, because from hence necessarily depends the happy or unhappy State and Condition of our spiritual Life. It is an easy thing, (as *S. James* observes,*) for a Person to say : My *Faith* is not only entire but strong and vigorous, believing with a most perfect and undoubting Assent every Dogma of Faith which is taught us by the Church, and to attest to God this my Faith, it appears to me that I should not hesitate, if necessary, to spill the last Drop of my Blood. In like manner as to *Hope*, I feel it very lively in my Heart, as I always confide in the infinite Goodness of God, that he will help me in the way to Salvation, and that he will in fact accomplish it, by granting me a full Pardon of all my Sins, meerly through
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* *S. James Epist. Chap. 2.*

his own Clemency and Mercy. But as to what regards the Virtue of *Charity*, or the Love of God and our Neighbour, it is here indeed, that but too many of us will be at a Loss. We shall discover that this Love is either wanting, or very weak in us; and there will be none probably who can persuade themselves that it is perfect, or at least somewhat strong in their Hearts; or if they believe it such, they will not perhaps advert to a secret Pride lurking in them, which obscures the Light of the Understanding.

When we firmly and solidly believe the Truths revealed to us by God, and so often inculcated to us by his Ministers; when we have a lively and ardent hope and desire to obtain that ineffable Reward, which our most bountiful Creator promises to his faithful Servants; and when we truly, and with a sincere heart-felt Attachment, love that God, who is to be loved above all things; then, indeed, and in such a Situation of the Heart and Mind, it is indubitable that we shall not commit Sin, or at least if we do fall, through our wretched Weakness and Frailty, we shall soon rise again. The Reason of this is, because, that the Soul being strongly actuated by these so salutary Principles, is easily impelled by them to do Good and avoid Evil. If this be not the general Tenour of our Conduct, we must confess, that these heavenly Virtues are either too weak and powerless, or perhaps entirely,

entirely, as it were, dead and extinct in our Souls. If we do not revive them from time to time in our Hearts and Minds, we shall never be able to serve, as we ought, our supreme Lord and Master, in Sanctity and Righteousness, as we shall likewise incur the Danger of losing for ever, that which we profess to believe and hope from him in the next Life. We are consequently therefore to infer, that the Acts of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, are in the highest Degree useful to us, and even necessary to nourish and invigorate the Life of the Spirit; and that we should once in each Day, or at least by frequent Habit, particularly when besieged by Temptation, and also at approaching the Sacraments, excite ourselves effectually to form the Acts of these Virtues, and earnestly beseech God to grant or increase them in us, as being the only genuine Sources of all others. Even the holy Apostles, although they conversed with their, and our, divine Saviour, saw from him such a Profusion of Miracles, heard his Words, which were indeed Words of eternal Life; yet they besought him to *increase their Faith*.* *S. Paul*, writing to the *Romans*, supplicated God, that he would *fill them with all Joy and Peace, in believing, that they may abound in Hope, and in the Power of the Holy Ghost*.§ Thus also in the Epistle to the *Thessalonians*,
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* *S. Luke*, Ch. 17. V. 5. § *Rom.* Ch. 15. V. 13.

he earnestly prayed that the Lord would *direct their Hearts in the Charity of God, and the Patience of Christ.** But because the Knowledge of these three so important and sublime Virtues is commonly too imperfect, general and confused, they are exceedingly good and necessary Topicks to enlarge upon, and thoroughly explain, for the Preachers of the divine Word, for spiritual Directors, and all those entrusted with the Education of Youth, for which Reason I shall now proceed to give each of them a distinct and separate Discussion.

CHAPTER VII.

On Faith.

GOD has revealed many Truths to us, by the Prophets, and chiefly by the Mouth of his divine Son, Jesus Christ, and his Apostles: These Truths regard, in part, his own infinite Attributes, and the Life itself of our blessed Redeemer, and partly the Nature of human Actions, with respect to moral Goodness or Evil. All these Truths the Christian is bound to believe, accordingly as they

they are proposed to us by the Catholic Church; because that God, who is the essential and infallible Truth, has made them known to us. Through his Goodness he confers upon us this Faith, and by humbly submitting our Understanding and our Will to Revelation, even in certain Points far above our Comprehension, yet not all at *contrary* to right Reason, we acquire thereby with him much Favour and Merit. For which Reason our Saviour declares in the Gospel, *Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed* : * This is principally said for us who have come into the World so long after his Preaching and his Miracles. But of what is not capable the proud or weak Understanding of some People? They sometimes feel in their Minds some doubts and difficulties as to the Mysteries of Religion. It is true, that even good and faithful Souls cannot always debar Access to certain Fears and Doubts which have a Tendency, if not to destroy, at least to weaken, in some Measure, the Vigour of their Faith. With respect to People of this Class, if ignorant, yet of good Morals, who, against their Will, find troublesome Clouds arise in their Minds, to obscure the Light of Faith: The most speedy Remedy to chase them away, is to recite with spirit and fervour the Creed of the Apostles, and immediately to form a quite contrary

* S. John, Chap. 20. Ver. 29.

trary Act of Faith. It will also be useful to reflect on so many Persons of the most piercing and exalted Genius, so many great Saints, so many thoroughly conversant in all the Sciences, in every Branch of Learning, who have so firmly believed in the Truths of Faith during the Course of so many Ages to this Day, when also so many of this Description do still continue to regulate their Lives and Conduct by this very Rule. Why, therefore, should an ignorant Person doubt of that which such a Multitude of Men, of the brightest Genius, the most profound Learning and Knowledge, have held, and still continue to hold, as most certain and indubitable? All of this Class, provided only that they are free from those Passions which conduct to Libertinism, that is, to shake off the Yoke of Faith, (though in itself sweet, wise and rational,) to enjoy a pernicious Liberty to gratify any irregular Appetite that may arise in their Hearts; they, I say, find not the least Difficulty in acknowledging the so strong and solid Foundations of natural and revealed Religion.

If with an unbiassed Mind, and an Heart free from the Corruptions of Passion, we set ourselves seriously to consider the Miracles, and the wonderful Life of our divine Legislator, Jesus Christ, foretold by so many Prophets, and their Prophecies verified in him, both in the Conversion of the Gentiles, and in the Church established by him; and also,

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how pure, how noble, and truly sublime, is the moral Doctrine which he taught, compared with which, all the Doctrines of the Philosophers of the Heathen World, must pass away and disappear : A System of Morality, within the reach of every Capacity, and which is our best Security for true Peace and Tranquillity, as well as solid substantial Enjoyment of our Existence here on Earth, as it is of our unspeakable eternal Happiness in a future State : If we properly reflect on this alone, without adducing any other Reasons, it is sufficient to convince us, that the Law of Christ comes from Heaven. We shall be farther confirmed in this by piously and attentively perusing the holy Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul, and of the other Apostles of the Lord. We may add to this, that these same Apostles and their Disciples, to say nothing of the numerous Host of their Successors, spilled their Blood and gave up their Lives to attest and support the Truth of the Christian Faith. If they who were either Contemporaries with our Saviour, or near his Time, were so strongly and thoroughly persuaded of the Truth of it, that they did not hesitate in the least to die for it, they could do nothing more to attest it; and if they, thus dying for the Love of Jesus Christ, were entirely convinced, that on leaving this World they were to pass into eternal Beatitude with Christ himself; is not this a sufficient Assurance

ance for us, that his Dogmas and Miracles were then known to be most certain, and proceeding from God? I have already said, that we ought to believe the Dogmas of Christianity, accordingly as they are proposed to us by the *Catholic Church*, in order that we may not fall into the Errors of so many Heretics and Schismatics, who in various and different contradictory ways explain, for themselves, the holy Scriptures, and thus have formed such a Number of jarring Sects; since it is clearly the Intention of God, and surely most rational to suppose it, that his Church should be *One*, that his Spouse should be *One*, that the Guardian of his Truths should be *One*, that there should be *One* sure, safe and certain Interpreter of his holy Will and Documents, from whom the Faithful ought to receive the Milk of true Doctrine. God has termed this Church by the Mouth of *S. Paul*, *The Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth.** Jesus Christ has protested in the Gospel, That she is *built upon a Rock* and that *the Gates of Hell*; that is, the Persecutions of the Impious and Wicked, as well as the Errors of Heresy, *shall never prevail against her*; and in the same Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ promised to be with this Church *All Days, even to the Consummation of the World;*

* *To Timothy, 1st Epist. Chap. 3. Ver. 15.*
S. Mat. Chap. 16. Ver. 18.

World;† *S. Paul* likewise assures us, that in her Communion there shall be always *Doctors, Pastors, Prophets* and *Apostles*, to the End of Time. If this Church then shall never fail; if, according to the Promises of God, who can never deceive, she shall be always visible, infallible, and exempt from Errors in her Doctrine, by a clear Consequence it follows, that the Catholic Christian may safely repose in a ready Assent to what she teaches, and has nothing to fear on the Side of Error. On the other hand, when the Protestants have been required, by our best Controvertists, to give a full and satisfactory Reason how they can believe their Church to be the true Church, since it is clear, that they separated themselves from us, and gave Birth themselves to a new kind of Church; nor can they deny, that all their Forefathers have lived in the Communion of the Roman Catholic Church, and that none other but this was held to be the true Church before their Separation; they, I say, have never been able to assign as full and convincing an Answer as their Situation necessarily demanded from them, in this so very nice and important a Question, to justify their Separation. The whole Edifice of Faith must surely fall to the Ground, by pretending that the True Church can err, and has erred in Fact. If this were the Case, if God has not established

† *S. Mat. last Chap.*

established in the Church the Authority of deciding Controversies, and of interpreting the Scriptures; and if the Understanding of their true Sense must depend upon the Exertions and turn of Mind of each Individual, the Mode of knowing and discerning the true Doctrine and Church of Christ, with any Degree of Certainty, would be lost for ever, and every Sect of Heretics, however pernicious and abominable to all others, but themselves, their Principles and Practices might appear, would still deem themselves entitled to call themselves, perhaps, the only true Followers of the Gospel, and only making a quite lawful and proper Use of the General Protestant Principle of Liberty of private Judgment: This, surely, must be considered as an intolerable and insolent Absurdity, when we reflect, that it is quite and expressly contrary to the clear self-evident Words of Jesus Christ, who has solemnly pledged himself to remain in and with his Church, even to the very End of the World.

For which Reason, every Roman Catholic ought to bless God, that he has made him a Member of that Church, which is the same as that of the first Ages of Christianity, and in which our Belief is sheltered from Error. It were much to be desired that every one of the Faithful were well versed in all the Dogmas of this holy Religion: For which end so many Schools of Christian Doctrine have been

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been instituted. But it is much to be lamented, that between the little Capacity and the great Inattention particularly, of Children, the Fruit which the Church desires is not obtained. In some Cities this Doctrine, (viz. of the Catechism,) is explained to the Adult, who hear it attentively and with Pleasure, and often profit well by it; for which Reason, would to God that this so laudable a Custom should become universal. The most ignorant of the People ought *at least* to learn that there is a God, One in Essence in which there are Three Persons, and that this God, infinitely just and merciful, shall recompense the Good with an unspeakable and eternal Reward in another Life, and punish the Wicked and Impenitent with most grievous Penalties that shall never have an End; and that the Son of God become Man, and called by us Jesus Christ, died to save us all, and to obtain for us by his Merits from his heavenly Father, the Forgiveness of our Sins, if we truly repent of them, and that he is the same Lord, who by the most admirable Condescension and Love for us, comes to be really and truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar. A Christian ought also to know the other Sacraments of the Church. As to what regards the speculative Dogmas of Religion, the Intention of this Class of People ought to be, to believe firmly all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches, and to renounce and detest

detest whatever she condemns : But as for the moral Dogmas, that is the Knowledge of what we call Sin, and what makes us lose the Grace of God as well as, consequently, renders us worthy of Hell ; every Christian ought to learn the ten Commandments of God, the deadly Sins, and the Precepts of the Church. By the help of these first Principles, by the light of Reason, and by hearkening to the Explanations of the Catechism, and the Preachers of the Word of God ; even they who cannot read, can acquire sufficient Light and Knowledge to discern what is sinful, but ought always, indeed, in any doubtful Cases, to ask the Advice of their respective Pastors, or other spiritual Directors. Here is then a small Abstract of *Faith* ; that is, of the first of the Theological Virtues, a Virtue which is the Gift of God, and infused by him in us, by the means of the Sacrament of Baptism : It is the Foundation of all others, and by it a Person begins to be called, and to be a Christian. But it is not sufficient to have Faith, as *S. James* teaches us in his Epistle, agreeably to the other Maxims of the Gospel, if this Faith be not accompanied by good Works, and still worse, if belied and contradicted by evil Works. We believe that God is to be honoured, yet how many prophane his holy Name. We confess that he is the Truth itself, yet some call him in Witness to a Lie. We are certain that he abhors and will punish the

the proud, the slanderer, the impure and unchaste, the unjust Invader or Detainer of the Property of another, &c. and yet how many among Christians who assert, indeed, in words, these and the like Truths, and, nevertheless, utterly and flatly deny them by their Actions. The true Faith, without which no Person can be called a true Christian, is that which, according to the Apostle, *operates through Charity*; that is, which is conjoined with the Love of God; and this Love, as we have said, is known by Works. We are then continually to pray to God, that he may revive or increase our dormant Faith, that he may make us have a strong and lively Sense of his Presence in every Place, his Penetration even into the inmost Recesses of our Hearts: of His infinite Holiness, by which he must detest all that is sinful, and his sovereign Justice to punish whoever impiously and insolently rebels against his holy Laws, and despises his kind and tender Invitations to return to him. When the Christian, whether in Church or elsewhere, applies himself to Prayer, if he has a present strong and intimate Sense of the awful Presence of his great invisible Lord and Master, the Almighty, who is hearkening to him, and well understands the internal Prayers of his Heart, it will not easily happen that his Thoughts shall wander about the Affairs of his Family, about a Law-suit he has on his Hands, about some Injury done him by his Neighbour, nor will

will his Eyes gaze about to see who is in Church, to admire any finery of Dress, or enter into frivolous Conversation with those who are near him. In like manner, it cannot surely be said that the true Fear of God dwells in us, whenever a lively Faith does not effectually remind us, and above all, in Temptations and Dangers of Sin, that this great God, terrible above all the Kings of the Earth, can, indeed, and will chastise whoever disobeys his Laws, and that our Folly, Rashness and Ingratitude are boundless, when we irritate against us the Lord of All, so kind and good a Master too, who has conferred, and every Day confers upon us, such signal and unspeakable Favours: Let us then fervently pray him, that through this Goodness he may make us *grounded and settled in the Faith*,* as his Apostle desired, and infuse in our Hearts the Dew of his Grace, by which this Faith may produce the Fruits of good Works, and corresponding to what we profess to believe.

It cannot be sufficiently inculcated, that how much the stronger and more lively our Faith shall be to believe, with an unceasing, powerful Influence, the holy Truths of the Gospel, ever present to our Eyes, so much the more shall we live like Christians, so much the stronger shall we be to resist the Attacks of every Temptation, and the more prompt
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* *Coloss. Chap. 1. Ver. 23.*

and ready to do every thing that is pleasing to God. Above all we should frequently remind ourselves that we believe in *Life Everlasting*. This is the ultimate and final End of Man. After this Life, which must last but for a little Time, another shall immediately commence, which is never to have End. God shall call us then to Account, to recompense us with unspeakable Rewards, if we shall have been faithful to his sacred Will and Laws, anxious and vigilant to live and die in his Grace and Favour; but, on the other Hand, ready to punish us, if we should unfortunately appear before him covered with Sins, without having obtained the Pardon of them, while the Time of Pardon was. These great Truths, if deeply impressed in our Hearts, will be sufficient to make us walk in the right Path before God; and if sometimes we chance to stray therefrom, to put us quickly in the right Road again. Those who sin, and remain quietly in their Sins, do they believe, or not believe, these Truths? In fine, let those who look upon themselves as Men of Letters, and especially those who think themselves endowed with a bright and penetrating Genius, remember, that Doubts concerning Faith may spring up in the Mind of any Person, but much more in him, who with a strong Understanding has also strong Passions, and is easily moved to wish and desire, that what is taught by Faith, in certain Points,

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may not be true at the Bottom, in order to give a free Scope to his favourite Pursuits and Inclinations. Nothing is more easy in People of this Class, than to rouse and awaken in their Hearts, Doubts and Difficulties against the holy Truths of Religion in such Circumstances. It is still worse with them, if they look out for, or find by Chance, so many pestilential Books of this kind, which are but too current in the World. The Protestant System, on account of the weak, uncertain, and vague Principles on which it is founded, easily conducts those who reason solely thereupon, to Incredulity, and hence the most enormous Scepticism and Infidelity are too often found among their Writers. But whoever truly and wisely loves himself, and of course loves God above all things, instead of seeking for what, in the end, may destroy the Faith in him, (which is a most grievous Sin) loves only, and searches for those Books, by which his Heart and Mind may be more and more fortified in the Belief of the Christian and Catholic Faith. Many are the Books of this kind to prove the Truth of both natural and revealed Religion. There are some on this head which are very useful, composed by the Protestants themselves. The Catholic Church abounds in other Writings, proving the Stability of her Doctrines, against all Heretics whatsoever. Here we should look for the Antidote to all Doubts respecting Religion, and not foolishly drink the

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the deadly Poison that is held out to us by our Enemies, and the Enemies of all Religion. Our unhappy Passions may somewhat cloud our Reason, but nevertheless, their very worst Effect it must always be, if they should, in the end, overpower and destroy that Faith, for which so many glorious Martyrs have laid down their Lives, so certain were they of the Truth of it. But whoever impiously abandons God, may expect to be abandoned by Him, and to feel incredible, and, perhaps, fruitless, Agonies of Mind at the Hour of Death. Blessed on the contrary in his Life, and still more blessed at the Close of it, is he, who, without seeing, has believed, and has faithfully lived according to his Belief. Never, indeed, shall he have cause to repent, who has been just and righteous, and a Lover of Virtue for the Love of God. But the Wicked and Immoral can promise themselves no such comfortable and pleasing Reflections in any Stage of Life.

CHAPTER VIII.

improbable every *On Hope.* *Sentiment*

IT would be after all but of little use to believe, with a lively Faith, that there is a Paradise, with all the inexhaustible Treasures of Bliss and Glory which it contains, if it

were designed solely for the holy Angels, and not also for us poor Mortals. But it is certain that we, likewise, may aspire to the Possession of it, being made and prepared for us as well as them; for which Reason *Hope* should be conjoined with *Faith* in the Heart of a Christian. The former is a supernatural Virtue, and like the others, given to and infused in us by God himself. By this Appellation we are to understand, *A Trust and Confidence which the Christian has to arrive to the Enjoyment of the supreme and sovereign Good, which is God, through his infinite Goodness, and the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, and also to obtain from him the Means of compassing this End*, that is, the Assistance of his Grace. So that we not only ought to believe that there is a heavenly Kingdom, but we ought likewise to be in continual Expectation of it, and to rouse and encourage this glorious Hope in our Hearts, with a lively Idea of obtaining this immense Reward at a proper Season. For which Reason, it is not only permitted to us to hope for it, but we are even commanded, on the Part of God, to cherish this Expectation in our Hearts, provided we are not wanting, on our Side, in the faithful Observance of his Commandments. How interesting then, sublime and happy an Idea is this, for those who profess the holy Law of Jesus Christ. It is then true, that Paradise, the unspeakably glorious and blissful King-

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dom of God is made for us, and our God invites us all thereto, desiring that every one of us may enter into Possession thereof, and enjoy it afterwards for all Eternity.

Here we ought to observe the *Foundation* of Christian Hope. It is, in one point of View, the infinite Goodness of God, his boundless Mercy and Veracity; and in another, the infinite Merit of his only Son, who came into this World to save and redeem us, and died for our sake, in order that we all, if our Will be properly inclined, being bought with his Blood, may ascend after him into Paradise. It is, indeed, certain, that if we turn our Eyes into ourselves we cannot find wherewithal to deserve an Entrance into those happy Regions; nay, perhaps, we shall find therein nothing but Demerits of every kind. Being born in Sin, by the pure Mercy of God, who has loved us before we loved him, we have been admitted into his Church, and consecrated his Children, and, by the most astonishing Condescension, poor and wretched Creatures that we are, we have acquired thereby, a Right to become Co-heirs with his own only begotten Son. But we, too much overcome by Concupiscence, seduced by our Passions, have too often risen in Rebellion against our Creator, and so wonderful a Benefactor, by transgressing and trampling upon his holy Law. Yet, what has our infinitely good, kind and merciful God done? He has

pursued us and advised us to Repentance, and
 at the very Instant of our Return to him, he
 grants our Pardon, and so entirely forgets all
 past Offences, that he orders us immediately
 to cherish again, as before our Sins, the no-
 ble and rapturous Hope of reigning eternal-
 ly, with inconceivable Splendour, Bliss and
 Glory. In fine, we have to do with a Lord
 and Master superior to all our Iniquities by
 his Goodness, and our Hope resting upon this
 blessed Attribute of his, ought to fill us with
 unspeakable Comfort, since we know that
 this excellent Father has a stronger desire to
 do Good to us, than even we to receive it at
 his Hands. He has positively assured us, in
 many places, by the Mouth of his divine Son,
 that we shall actually be promoted to this
 grand and sublime Elevation. God is Truth
 itself, and never can deceive us: wherefore
 our Hope is indeed thoroughly well founded,
 because God himself promises us, the infinite
 Glory and Happiness of Paradise; God, who
 well can, and will, most certainly, keep his
 Word with us. The Heavens and Earth
 shall pass away, but his Word shall, indeed,
 remain for ever.

The next immediate Motive and Founda-
 tion of Christian Hope, consists in the Merits
 of that divine Lamb who, for the Love he
 bore us, offered himself up in Sacrifice to his
 heavenly Father on the Cross. This great
 Truth ought to be ever present to the Mind.

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All the Good we possess or can hope for, pertaining to our Souls, comes not, nor will come, from any other Source than from our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who appeased for us his eternal Father, and who obtains for us whatever is necessary for the Salvation of our Souls. We, on our part, cannot present ourselves before the Throne of God without Sins : The precious Blood of our Redeemer can alone cancel those Sins and cleanse away their Stains. If we even appear before him with good Works, they become meritorious only by being accompanied with the Merits of Jesus Christ. What Love, what *Devotion*, should not this Truth inspire us with towards him ; and at the same time, what transporting Hope of compassing the grand and capital Object of our eternal Salvation, when we reflect, that we hope in that loving God who came down from Heaven, expressly for the purpose of bringing us all in Triumph into the Mansions of everlasting Glory ! For which Reason, the Christian, if interrogated as to the reason and motive of his Hope, should immediately answer, with courageous Confidence, *Christ Jesus is my Hope,** and thus hoping, I shall never perish. But God, the Author and the Giver of *Hope*, exacts from us, at the same time, the faithful Observance of his holy Law. God, on his Side, through his infinite

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* *S. Paul to Timothy, 1 Ep. Chap. 1. Ver. 1.*

Goodness, and the ineffable Merits of his divine Son, is ready to save us, nay, desires nothing more than this Event. But it is equally certain, that it agrees not with his Dignity, neither was it ever his Will, to make partaker of his Glory, one who leaves this World in a State of Rebellion and at Enmity with him; the Faith teaching us, that eternal Punishment is to be his dreadful Lot. Wherefore it is but reasonable, that the Hope of a Christian should be accompanied with the Observance of the Law of God; that is, of his Commandments, and the Precepts of the Church, to which Jesus Christ has entrusted on Earth the Government of the Faithful in his Name and by his Authority. For which Reason, the Hope of that Christian is complete and perfect, who, on the one Side, feels himself animated with Confidence in the Promises, and in the Goodness of God, and knows that his divine Saviour will leave nothing undone for his Salvation, in the Hands of whom are placed the Keys of Paradise, who opens, and no Person can shut; and, on the other Side, exerts himself diligently to be faithful to his God, doing what is by him commanded, and carefully shunning what is by him forbidden. In the Hearts of such Christians, indeed, there should be a strong and lively Confidence, as well as an unspeakable Peace and Joy: For such is made for those especially, is Paradise designed, for all
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who feel in themselves a strong and fixed Resolution to keep in Union with God. They may, indeed, say with the Psalmist, *I have rejoiced in those things which have been told unto me, we shall enter into the House of the Lord.**

We are certain, (they may say,) that our good and loving Creator expects us to be with him, and has prepared Places for us, in that Palace where he dwells, in Company with his Angels and Saints, and where he crowns his faithful Servants with Bliss and Glory far beyond all power of Utterance.

But when we hear the Condition proposed, that is, that we should, indeed, hope to attain to this glorious State, provided, however, that we on our Side, should be faithful to God, in the Observance of his most holy Laws, we are apt to feel a certain Terror, to be covered with a certain Gloom, quite opposite and contrary to our Hope. We cannot certainly doubt of the Promises of God, but we may indeed doubt of ourselves. We, wretched Sinners, we, exposed every Day to every Wind of new Temptations, to the Danger of new Sins, we, so extremely weak and frail, that Weakness is our peculiar and most striking Attribute, incessantly instigated to Evil by an inborn Concupiscence, how shall we be able to sustain ourselves, and persevere even to the end without falling? This Fear is,

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• Psalm 119. Ver. 1.

confessedly, but too just, and *S. Paul* has advised us to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*.* Wherefore the Hope of a Christian is always to be attended with Fear. But this Fear, (let us carefully remark it,) ought to be the *Companion*, not the *Enemy* of Hope. This Fear should operate no farther than to render us cautious, prudent and vigilant, in the way of our Salvation, to keep the Senses within due Bounds, to make us fly all dangerous Occasions, to preserve us from sinking insensibly into the Delights and Pleasures of this World. We all, without exception, have occasion for it, to keep us humble, and in a perpetual Sense of our own Insignificancy. But it should by no means be such as would afflict us, or disturb in the least our Peace and Tranquillity; and it is for this that the royal Psalmist tells us, *Exult before Him with trembling*. Much less ought it to dispirit any Person who finds a strong actual Abhorrence in his Heart of whatever may displease the Almighty. For to the hope of attaining one Day to the Glory of Heaven, there should be closely subjoined another Act of Hope itself; that is, that God, through his infinite Goodness, will also furnish us completely with all the Means of Salvation, and that this good Father, will powerfully aid and assist us in every Temptation that can possibly

* *Philip. Chap. 2. Ver 12.*

possibly happen, and conduct us in Triumph to his heavenly Kingdom, in the very Sight and View of all our Enemies. And if through our wretched Frailty we should even happen to fall in the Contest, it is proper to hope, that this Father of Mercies will hold out his Hand to us, and quickly dispose us to rise again and return to him. We ought most certainly to distrust ourselves, because that of ourselves we are not able to chuse that which is good, and reject the bad ; but, by the help of the Grace of God, on account of Jesus Christ, we can do all Things. The same Apostle who advised us a little before, to walk with Fear, tells us, for our Comfort and Instruction also, speaking of himself, *I can do all things with the Lord, who comforts and helps me.* Good Christians can say as much with lively Confidence, being already assured by other clear Testimonies of the sacred Writings, that, provided the Assistance of divine Grace be implored with Sincerity and Earnestness, God will not deny it, but mercifully grant it to his Children.

Happy, thrice happy, are those who have strictly and carefully preserved the beautiful State of Innocence, from the time they began to have the use of Reason, and always loving God, always faithful to him, never deviated into the Paths of Iniquity ! They, indeed, may, with fulness of Hope, expect the immense Reward prepared for the

the Friends of God. And although, during the course of this mortal Life, even they cannot be entirely void of Fear, yet have they the greatest Cause for Hope, the greatest Incentive to Courage and Intrepidity, in the Persuasion, that the so powerful Lord, who has hitherto preserved them from falling, will not withdraw the Influence of his Grace, in order that they may arrive unhurt at the end of their Career. But what will become of Sinners, such an innumerable Class of People, what kind of Hope is proper for them? They are of two kinds, that is, Actual Sinners, and under the immediate Disgrace of God; and Sinners, who bewail their Offences, returning to their offended Father. As to the first, I very much grieve to pronounce a Sentence which, however, they cannot but know themselves, that is, that during their State of actual Enmity with God, with a persevering Resolution therein, the Hope of Salvation, in such a case, and with such sentiments, would certainly be injurious and insulting to God. As long as the Sinner has the impious Boldness to persist obstinately in Rebellion, or with an highly offensive Ease and Tranquillity of Mind, quietly continues his sinful Courses, he is undoubtedly the Enemy of God, and as such, has lost every Right to the Kingdom of Heaven. He has only acquired a woful title to the dreadful Mansions of the Wicked. Wherefore, in
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this case, being quite unworthy of Paradise, he cannot hope for it without Presumption, and meriting only Punishment, he ought to look for nothing else. Certain it is, indeed, that God never ceases to be merciful, but it is a great Injury to his Mercy to rely upon it, in no other Sense, but to sooth the Sinner in his Offences and Iniquities, and keep him in a State of Impenitence, merely because God is good and merciful. But when was it that the Mercy of God has annihilated his Justice? We are bound to adore both Attributes in him, rejoicing in the one, and impressed with a salutary Terror of the other, in the fixed Persuasion, that if we chuse not by Repentance to find him merciful, we shall find him a just Avenger whether we will or not. Nevertheless, if a Sinner, reflecting on the Misery of his present State, and the hazard he incurs of being lost for ever, should say, that he hoped that God will help him to shake off his Fetters, and make him return into the right Way, this kind of Act of Hope in him, is not to be condemned: because this Act, such as it is, would arise from a good Principle, that is, from a Desire just commencing, but as yet imperfect, of a change of Life, and of turning his Heart from Creatures to his all-amiable Creator. Whenever this unhappy Sinner shall implore with sincere Prayers, and all the Fervour of his Heart, the Assistance of the Most High, although

although he be unworthy of it, nor God obliged to grant it, yet it is laudable in him, to hope that God will be moved to pity him, and deign to inspire him with an *efficacious* Repentance of his Offences.

With regard to Sinners converted and re-instated, by the means of the right use of the Sacrament of *Penance* in the Grace of God, they, indeed, should cherish in their Hearts a lively and animating Hope. It is true, indeed, that they have often and in many different ways offended their God, but from the time that, with true and solid Repentance, they have had a due recourse to his Mercy, and received the Absolution of their Sins from his Ministers, acting in his Name, and by his Authority, they ought certainly to hope, that they are restored to the Friendship and Favour of God, and that he looks upon them no more as Enemies, but as his well-beloved Children. He who created Man is not, indeed, like Man, deaf to the Voice of imploring Supplication, and eagerly prone to Vengeance : His Thoughts are only of Peace and Pardon ; and He himself, both inwardly and outwardly, tenderly strives to reclaim those in Rebellion against him, and provided He beholds them sorry for their manifold Crimes, he is quick in granting Pardon, after which he instantly forgets them all, nor ever after makes of them the smallest Matter of the slightest Reproach or Censure. It is greatly

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to be wondered at how any Sinners can be found who, after having done all that appertained to them to enter again into the Grace and Favour of God, should permit themselves to be afflicted and tormented with excruciating Doubts, whether God has pardoned them or not, with a gloomy Fear of being still in Disgrace with Him, and that the Gates of Heaven are still shut against them. Do such People really believe the Gospel? In this most holy Book our Lord has set before our Eyes, under the Veil of a Parable, the Treatment * which his heavenly Father uses towards Sinners converted to him. Into what Follies, what Enormities, did not the prodigal Son, that unthinking Youth, give way, when after having extorted from his Father his share of the Inheritance of the Family, he immediately betook himself to the Gratification of every disorderly Impulse of Passion? Yet, after all, he hardly appears on his Return before his good Father, although all in Rags and covered with Filth, the effect of his own Folly, but with Sorrow in his Heart and in his Looks, but he, touched with paternal Love and Pity, runs forth to meet him, throws his Arms about his Neck, gives him the Kiss of Peace and Pardon, and makes a plentiful Feast for all his Family, diffusing Joy and Festivity all over his House, for the
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* *S. Luke, Chap. 15. Ver. 12.*

happy Recovery of his poor Child. Moreover, our loving Saviour describes himself in another Place, under the Figure of a Shepherd, * who having lost one of his Sheep, leaves all the rest to go anxiously in search of it, and having fortunately found it, puts it tenderly and carefully upon his own Shoulders, and with a Heart full of Joy brings it back to the Flock in Safety. Can the excellent, adorable, and most loving Heart of God towards us, wretched, unworthy Sinners, be described in more strong and lively Colours? He has also declared, what we never can consider without Amazement, and if we have a human, not a stony Heart, without bursting out into the warmest Expressions of astonished Gratitude towards so excellent and incomparable a Father; that is, *I here shall be more Joy in Heaven for one Sinner doing Penance, than for ninety-nine just Persons who do not want it.* § For this Reason, the Son of God protested, that *He was come to call, not the Just, but Sinners.* † Now, all these things considered, is it possible to have an Idea of more exalted Goodness, more exquisite Feelings of Compassion, and transcendent Mercy?

He who knows and hears those Truths from the Mouth of God himself, ought likewise to be convinced, that he wrongs himself very much, whenever, after a sincere Repentance

* S. Matth. C. 18. V. 12. § S. Luke, C. 15. V. 7.

† S. Matth. C. 9. V. 13.

ance and Conversion from his evil Ways, he still doubts of the Love of God for him, or, perhaps, suspects with Anxiety, and fills his Imagination with the fearful Idea of the Anger of God still subsisting against him. It is indeed true, that the Remembrance of our Sins neither can, nor ought to be banished from our Minds: But this Remembrance should serve to no other purpose, but to make us walk for the future with more Prudence, Caution and Humility, and that by the Exercises of Penance, we should amend what is past, and by fervent Prayers to God, preserve ourselves from future Danger. But it should not be at all permitted to cover us with Melancholy, to produce excruciating Scruples, and highly improper, unworthy Doubts of the divine Goodness. In this sense it can tend to nothing but to cool the Faithful in the Love and Service of God; wherefore, a converted Sinner should carefully preclude such Doubts and Fears from his Heart, and if they have taken some Root there, he should instantly pluck them up, and cast them away. For, in Truth, the Lord wills to be served with Gladness of Heart, as he has declared to us frequently in the Scriptures. What Caresses, what endearing Favours has he not lavished upon so many penitent Sinners, who were at first sunk in all manner of Iniquities and Abominations? We shall see, yes, we shall see, one Day, if, through the Mercy

Mercy of God we arrive at Paradise, a far greater Number, by many degrees, therein, of penitent Sinners, than of the ever Unoffending and Innocent. But as for those so fearful, timid and scrupulous Persons, filled with so much uneasiness and disquietude, so many doubts and terrors, both for the Sins already committed, as well as for those they imagine, upon the slightest foundation, they are committing every Day let them know and be convinced, that God is not only pleased, but even commands that we hope in Him. This supernatural Virtue may, through our fault, degenerate into vicious Extremes, similar to those of the moral Virtues, that is, on the one Side from Excess, as in *Presumption*, and on the other from a Deficiency, as in a *Distrust of God*. We have already taxed those with Presumption, who, although immersed in Sin, and without the least desire or design of Amendment, still hope for the Kingdom of Heaven. Presumptuous, or rather impious would he be, who should place the hope of his eternal Salvation upon the Basis of his own Strength, or his own natural Merits. On the other hand, whoever among the Just does not hope in God to the proper Measure of this Duty, wrongs him very much in having too poor and confined an Idea of his infinite Goodness and Clemency, in representing him to his Mind and Imagination as slow and tardy in granting Pardon, and

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almost utterly implacable ; in fine, by not giving place in his Heart to that *Confidence* in God, which is the Effect of true and genuine Hope. Let us all then, who sincerely repent of our Sins, say to the God of our Souls, that we will cherish a lively Hope, an Hope that shall never desert us ; That according to the Multitude of his Mercies, he has pardoned us all our Sins ; That we also hope, that he will assist us, that we may not fall any more in the Path to our eternal Salvation ; And that we entertain this comfortable Hope, because that He himself has clearly and openly declared, that *Whoever hopes in God shall never be confounded.**

It is proper to add to what has been already said, that how many, and how grievous soever, have been our Crimes, Sins, and Offences of every kind, let their Enormity be what it may or can be, from the Moment that a spirit of true Repentance guides the Sinner to that Tribunal, where the Ministers of God are appointed Dispensers of the divine Clemency, Hope should most certainly, instantly spring up in the Heart. We have the express Word of God himself, who assures us in plain Terms, that, *If our Sins shall have been as Scarlet, they shall become as white as Snow.* § St. James tells us, *Mercy exalteth itself above Judgment.* † God declares by the Prophet, *Ezekiel ; ‡ But if the Wicked do Penance for all*

* Psalm 70. V. 1.

§ Isaiah, C. 1. V. 18.

† C. Chap. 2. V. 13.

‡ C. 18. 21 and 22 Ver.

all his Sins which he hath committed, and keep all my Commandments, and do Judgment and Justice, living, he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his Iniquities that he hath done; in his Justice which he hath wrought he shall live. We ought to hold it firmly as an Article of Faith, that the Mercy of God shall be for ever greater, beyond all Comparison, than all the Iniquities of all Mankind, will, or can possibly be. For which Reason, great Sinners may very reasonably, indeed, profoundly humble themselves, on the Consideration of their so many horrible Offences, and the boundless Irregularity of their past Conduct, but carefully beware, however, of any Diffidence in the unlimited Goodness of Him, who has called them back, his prodigal Children, to the House of their Father. Can the Power of him be doubted to whom nothing is impossible? Or the Will of him who chuses to be stiled by Excellence, *The Father of Mercies*? It would be still worse, indeed, if this Diffidence were to terminate at last in *Despair*. This is a Vice entirely opposite to, and destructive of the heavenly Virtue of *Hope*. It is impossible to conceive a worse State than that of a Christian who gives himself up to Despair, in the false and fatal Persuasion, that he is either out of the reach of Pardon, or what is worse, that God expressly either cannot, or will not forgive him, and that Heaven for him is entirely out of the

Question.

Question. Now this very Act of the Mind itself, as it is a most grievous Offence to God, so it is in the Nature of it, a Sin of the greatest Enormity. But what is most terrible is, that it is impossible, that whilst a Man remains in such a State he can reconcile himself with God; because that at the same time, by denying his divine Attributes, instead of appeasing, he still continues to offend him. God can permit so horrible a Misfortune to befall the Sinner, in order to punish him for his hardened inveterate Obstinacy in Iniquity, and the contemptuous Neglect of so many kind and merciful Invitations to Repentance and Conversion. But if hardened Sinners leave themselves any room for proper Reflection, let them consider that, although it be most true that they deserve not Pardon for so many horrible Sins and Crimes which they have committed, yet when does God ever look for any Merits in any part of our Lives, for our own proper Merits, to induce him to grant us Pardon? He looks upon his own blessed Son, who died for us, and for our Love, who offers up to him our Repentance, and renders us again pleasing and agreeable in his Sight. If we deserve nothing of ourselves, surely this great Mediator between God and Man, deserves every thing from his heavenly Father; this our loving Advocate, if he has a Fund of Merit sufficient to cancel all the Sins of the whole World, as his beloved Apostle assures us, will it not be enough

enough to wash away the Offences of one Man alone? * *He is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole World.* Away then with so horrible a Persuasion, either as respectively to the Number or Enormity of our Offences, or the implacable Rigour and Severity of God. Whenever we recall to our Minds with a lively Faith the Son of God on the Cross, however enormous our Crimes and Offences may be, a foolish, irrational, and highly offensive Persuasion must it ever be, to harbour any Despair of the Mercy of God, and certainly much more, if we sincerely repent of our wicked ways. The royal Prophet even cried out, that his Iniquities grew so high as to *cover his Head.* § But what then? As he well knew that the Mercy of God has no Bounds and Limits, to this he has Recourse; before this divine and all-consoling Attribute, he acknowledges with Tears, and sighing, detests the Greatness of his Offences; but then he courageously hopes, and looks up for Pardon.

C H A P.

* *S. John, Ep. 1. C. 2.* § *Psalms 37. V. 5.*

CHAPTER IX.

On Charity, or, The Love of God and our Neighbour.

THE Virtues of *Faith* and of *Hope* are necessary to a Christian; but these would be but little profitable if *Charity* were not subjoined to them, a Virtue which is, by the Attestation of *S. Paul*, greater and more important than the two former. By the Name of *Charity* we are to understand the *Love of God* and the *Love of our Neighbour*: Two Species of Love in Name, but in effect should not be called but one Love, because the latter then only acquires and merits the Appellation of *Charity*, when for and on Account of the *Love of God*, we extend our Love to others. Now the Essence of Christian Perfection principally consists in the Possession, and the Exercise of this incomparable Virtue, which is a gratuitous Gift, descending to us from the Bounty of God himself; and it may be said, that he possesses all who truly loves God: for, suppose the Heart of a Man really inflamed with this heavenly Ardour, he will have a strong and ardent Desire to please God in all Things, and thus nothing will be wanting to him to make him be loved by his Creator,

ator, in this present Life, and to fill him with Hopes to enjoy and possess him hereafter. By the *Love of God*, we understand that Attachment and Affection which every rational Creature ought to profess and have for *God the Creator*, the Almighty, One in Essence in Three Persons, the Author of Grace and of Glory. If any one should happen to think, that this Love should be confined *solely* to God the *Redeemer*, that is, to Jesus Christ, to whom, certainly, a similar Love is due by every Individual of us, he would be mistaken as to the principal Object of Christian Charity. For what did the Son of God become Man, labour to promote so much on Earth as the Love of all Mankind, for his heavenly Father, and his Honour and Glory in all things? For which Reason, the chief and primary Obligation of a Christian, is to love GOD the MOST HOLY TRINITY, and to love HIM with *all our Heart, all our Soul, and all our Strength*, as our divine Master has expressly taught us, acknowledging him as the Lord and Master of ALL, and as our loving Father, dwelling in Heaven in the Fullness of his Glory, and every where present by his Immenfity.

As this Great God is invisible to our corporeal Eyes, it so happens, that how much soever we believe in him, yet his Majesty, Greatness, Goodness, and Kindness, make not that Impression on us which he so well deserves.

serves. We must seek him by the Powers of Thought and Reflection properly directed; but they, too often, are confined to the Earth, and the mere Objects of Sense. It is certain, that if he suffered himself to be beheld here below, as the Fountain of all Good and Happiness, such a Sight would completely fill us with Wonder, with Love, with Beatitude. But this Happiness is reserved solely for the Angels and Saints in Heaven. As for us, since Reason and Faith shew us that there is a God, it is certainly our Duty to have him always present to our Memory and Mind, and to carefully consecrate to him our Love and Attachment. Who is the Servant, who having a good and kind Master, does not think of him, love him, and serve him with Alacrity and Cheerfulness? The Reasons we have to love the Lord our God are infinite. The Saints and holy Persons who lift up their Thoughts to him, and observe with the Eyes of Faith his unspeakable Attributes, his Power, Goodness, Beauty, &c. love him, and sigh to love him more and more every Day; because the more they examine him, the more worthy of all Love, and above all things they will certainly find him. If we, alas! but too imperfect! do not arrive to this high pitch of Thought and Attachment, we can at least, and we ought to aspire to it, by reflecting on him as our great Benefactor, and the *Lover of Mankind*, as he is termed by *S. Paul*. This

will be the more easy to us, as herein we shall be aided by our Self-Love, a powerful Auxiliary in every Case, where it is in the least interested. So great and signal are the Benefits conferred upon us by the Author of All Being, that the most Illiterate can contemplate them with ever so little Reflection. Man is a noble Piece of Workmanship, as to his Body, but is still more wonderful, as to his Soul. To whom are we indebted for the otherwise impossible Privilege of Existence of any kind, but to that Power supreme, who with a Word only, brought us out of nothing, and, at the same time, so many other innumerable Bodies, animate and inanimate, destined for our Use, Conservation and Delight. If we study the Book of this World, we must be quite filled with Admiration, at the vast Display of so many and various Works of the Hand of God, both in the Heavens and on Earth, and not only in the largest Animals, Birds and Fishes, but even in the most minute Insects, that exhibit the most curious and nicest Workmanship in their Structure, as also in other innumerable natural Bodies, besides the admirable Causes and Effects of Light, of Sounds, and of Colours. Those Philosophers who contemplate attentively and minutely so many interesting Objects, and trace the wonderful Hand of God in their Formation, who cannot but know, at the same time, their end and destination, all to raise the rational Part
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of the Creation, to the Knowledge and Love of the great Author, will surely, most deservedly, incur a heavy Censure, if they make not this Use of their Knowledge; they shall be covered with Confusion, when confronted with so many illiterate and ignorant Persons, who shall be proved to have been much wiser and more truly learned than they, because they have loved and served, with their whole Heart, the Great Being who made them. Every one knows that Health is the Gift of God, as well as the Means of Subsistence, the Fruits of the Earth, and all other temporal Benefits, which the divine Providence dispenses here below, suited to different Climates and Constitutions formed by them, and without any Plea, on our side, to exact them as justly due to us. Greater still are the Gifts of a bright Understanding, a strong Memory, and good Dispositions. In fine, we find ourselves surrounded on all Sides, with Benefits and Blessings (to speak only of those of a *natural* kind) which cry out to us, that we are stupidly insensible, if we reflect not on him, whose kind and boundless Generosity has conferred them all upon us, and are still worse, and more horribly ungrateful, if we love not so great, so signal a Benefactor.

These Benefits are still but little or nothing in comparison to others which we have partly received, and are partly to hope for, with respect to the Happiness of our Souls. We

firmly believe, that our most kind Creator has sent upon Earth his only begotten Son to ransom us, to make us his own, in order to our eternal Salvation. He has prepared Heaven for us, He has made us be enrolled in that holy Religion, which can alone conduct us to that Kingdom of all Happiness, and administers to every one sufficient Inspirations, Means and Aid to arrive thereat in due time. This Beatitude, (that is to say) to arrive to the Enjoyment of God, our first Beginning, and our last End, is an incessant Object of the supernatural Love we owe him, both because he is good and perfect in himself, and is also willing to communicate this unspeakable Happiness and Glory to us. So that on whatever side we consider him, we find the Fountain of all Goodness in him, our Creator and our Redeemer; and all the most powerful Motives and Obligation to love so amiable a Sovereign, full of Kindness, Benevolence, Clemency and Mercy. And as it is his Will, that we should call him by the dear and tender Name of Father, shewing himself thus so fond of us, although he wants us not in any thing, for his Happiness and Glory, how much more should not we be moved to love him, we, who stand in Need of him for every Thing, and in all Respects whatsoever? The manner of making known, on our part, the Love we so justly owe him, is chiefly threefold: The first, already explained, consists in a true Obedience

ence to his holy Laws. Let us slightly glance upon our Works. Since the Lord of All prohibits Injustice, Impurity, Intemperance, and other Vices, that are reprobated, even by the Light of pure natural Reason, how can it be, that when, by the Irregularity of our Appetites, Desires and Actions, we shock the Sanctity, and flatly contradict the Will of our good and gracious God, we can say, without the most shameless Effrontery, that we love him, that we bear him a true and cordial Affection? The first Mark of any true Love, is surely not to displease the Object of it, not even in the most trivial Matters. Our divine Saviour has expressly told us; *If you love me, keep my Commandments.** We are here to observe, that this Observance of the Law of God, should not be for meer human Motives, but through a Desire of pleasing him. Those who abstain from transgressing this Law, only for fear of human Chastisements, or even, if it be solely and barely of those which God himself threatens, and will infallibly inflict on the Disobedient, and through this Fear simply, have Recourse to the Tribunal of his Mercy, they surely shew a very imperfect Movement of their Hearts, because they prove, that they love themselves alone, and not that God, whom we ought to love above every other Consideration, and even above ourselves.

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* S. John, Chap. 14. Ver. 15.

From what has ben said, we are to infer, that if we truly observe the Christian Law, both as to the Abstinence from what is thereby prohibited, and the Practice of what is thereby commanded, we shall infallibly arrive to eternal Salvation. Here we must always bear in our Minds, that the sole Abstinence from Evil should never be deemed sufficient, by him who professes a true and sincere Love to the Lord his God. The holy Scriptures tell us, that we ought to chuse what is good, as well as to fly from Evil, that is, not only preserve ourselves from Sins and Vices, but also, at the same time, to embrace Virtue, and give ourselves with Alacrity to the Performance of good Works. There are two Motives for this, and both highly important. To those who truly love, it is not sufficient merely not to offend the beloved Object, and not to give any Cause of Displeasure; they ought also to endeavour, by all means, to do every thing that may be pleasing and agreeable in his Sight. It is then, indeed, they shew the true and genuine Disposition of an Heart where true Love resides. Secondly, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, that without an *active* Virtue, Man can be long free from Vice, and not fall into Sins, because the very Habits of *active* Virtue are Means, highly useful and necessary to avoid Temptation and sinful Actions. And, moreover, the more Good we do here on Earth, through the Purpose and

and Desire of pleasing God, so much the greater shall be the Reward we shall obtain for it in Heaven.

The second Manner of proving our Love for God, is to suffer willingly, and support with generous Magnanimity, every Trial to which we may be exposed, for the Love of him. The World in which we live, is composed of Rich and Poor, of the Noble and Plebeians, of the Healthy and Infirm, of those who bask in the Sun-shine of Prosperity, and those who groan under the Weight of Affliction and Adversity. God has been willing, that this Variety and Diversity of Conditions, should subsist amongst us, and it is our Duty to adore in Silence the Dispensations of divine Providence in the fixed Persuasion of the infinite Goodness and Justice of him who governs all Things, and as the Distribution of both good and evil temporal Things proceeds from his Will, or his Permission, that both the one and the other is necessarily fraught with heavenly Wisdom. It is true, that we, short-sighted as we are, sometimes beholding the Wicked at the very height of Prosperity, and the Good and Just overwhelmed with Adversity and Calumny; are apt to be much struck and surprized, and know not what Interpretation to put on such Matters; yet, upon the least Reflection, we must be convinced, that God, who is Wisdom itself, has, most certainly, his Views and

Designs therein, impenetrable at present to us, and which are infallibly just and holy, and that, therefore, what appears to us strange and irregular in such Permissions, is nevertheless, in the End, wise and regular, since it is so *permissively* disposed by Him, who cannot operate through any Caprice, and is, moreover, for our Comfort, our heavenly Father. The Day will come when the Balance shall be struck. Woe be to those who, being tenderly treated by the Almighty in this World, have returned him nothing in exchange, but Sin and Iniquity. Blessed, on the contrary, shall be those, who, although in the midst of Trials and Tribulations, yet have kept their Eyes constantly fixed upon God, knowing it was He who held the Rod in his Hands, and believing, with unalterable Firmness, that in the End, All would turn out for the better, whatever the present Appearances might be. And in reality, is it not too true, that in the midst of worldly Prosperity, we are extremely prone to be lulled into a thoughtless Forgetfulness of our most important Duties, we lose Sight of God and of a future State, and that from thence are derived both the Temptation, and the Facility of gratifying every irregular and disorderly Passion? For which Reason, Adversity is of the highest use to us, to awaken us from our dangerous Dream of Security, to make us feel, that in this inconstant and fluctuating World, we are not to look for a lasting

lasting and solid State of Felicity, and that we are to look for it only in that Kingdom which God promises to his faithful Servants. The Good console themselves under the Pressure of all the most humiliating Distresses, and even rejoice in their strict Conformity to Jesus Christ, in bearing the Cross in Company with Him, and that, in this manner, they are conducted in that way which leads the most securely to Paradise, when they bear it with the sole View and Intention of pleasing God, by their Humility, their silent Patience, and placid Resignation. Let us, in fine, be thoroughly and entirely convinced and persuaded, that the true Sanctity of Man can consist in nothing else, but in a total unlimited Conformity to the Will of God in every respect. Shall Poverty then make her Appearance, shall Sickness invade us, shall any other Distresses approach us, whoever is a true Servant of God will say immediately ; either the Will, or the *Permission*, of my adorable Lord and Master sends me these Trials ; as I was not born for the purpose of gratifying my own, but much rather His high Will, I cannot more certainly prove to Him my Love and my Obedience, than with silent, uncomplaining Submission and Resignation, to take at his Hands, whatever my blind and sinful Self-Love most abhors. Let his Will be now and for ever done. Let my heavenly Physician treat me as he pleases, let him not spare

me any the most painful Operation, provided that I save my Soul, and arrive, one happy blisful Day, to the Enjoyment of his heavenly Kingdom.

The third Manner of proving the Love we have of God, is to love, *for his Sake, and on his Account*, our Neighbour, that is, all Mankind, and to have for others a Love equal and similar to that which we have for ourselves. This is one of the most frequent and important Exhortations of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and is often inculcated by his holy Apostles, not even admitting any Exception, with regard to our greatest Enemies, who hate, calumniate, or persecute us, or wish to inflict any Evil whatsoever upon us. Let us consider the great Earnestness with which our heavenly Father recommends this Line of Conduct to us. Since then we have nothing to offer in Return to him for all his Benefits, and that he has expressly and positively declared, that whatever Good we shall do to our Neighbour, let him be what he may, even our most implacable Enemy, this kind and good Father will reckon it, whether of a spiritual or temporal Nature, as if it were, in reality, done to himself, in his own proper Person, and that this very thing shall be the sure and certain Mark and Standard of the true and undissembled Love and Affection, to which he is so well intitled. He has promised immense Rewards to those who re-
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lieve the Wants of others, of whatever kind they may be, with a Protestation, that it is of *this*, chiefly and principally, He will exact an Account in his tremendous Judgment. Finally, He has told us,* that this brotherly Love, this Charity, expressed in Deed and in Action, not solely in smooth and friendly Words, as being the great Chain of human Society, the eternal Preserver of Peace, Order and Harmony, so strongly and so repeatedly enforced by Him, the Author and Source of all good Order, is to be, as it were, the Livery by which we are to be remarked and known to be his Disciples, and true Christians. After this Nothing more is surely necessary to be added on this Subject.



CHAPTER X.

On Prayer.

THE Fountain from whence good Works spring, we have said to be the three divine Virtues, called, *Theological*. Now we are to observe, that we have within us an Enemy, who opposes himself, as much as possible, to those Virtues, and if he cannot prevail so far as to hinder their dwelling in our Hearts,

* *Si John, Chap. 13. Ver. 35.*

Hearts, he endeavours, at least, to weaken their Power, to prevent their Effects; he excites us, but too strongly, to quite contrary Operations, which we call Sins. We are composed of Spirit and Matter; like to Angels in the one, and mere Animals in the other. The Spirit, that is, the Soul endowed with Reason, ought to rule over the Flesh, and regulate with Wisdom its blind and brutal Impulses, but it frequently happens, a Misery never to be sufficiently deplored! that inordinate Desires, inspired, as it were, from the Body to the Soul, subvert the Empire of Reason, and draw us down to a close similitude with Beasts. If we reflect but ever so little upon ourselves, we soon find, and clearly perceive within ourselves, a great Bias, a wonderful Easiness to do Evil, and not a little Difficulty to do Good; this arises from our corrupt Nature, which Corruption, according to the Testimony of the holy Scriptures, proceeds from the Crime of our first Parents. We have Desires, Inclinations, and strong Passions of various kinds; sometimes we are impelled to Intemperance in eating and drinking, and to Indulgence in other unlawful Pleasures; sometimes by Ambition, in search of worldly Honours and Promotion, by Avarice to accumulate Riches, although sometimes by ways and means reprobated by right Reason, and the Will of God; sometimes by the Spirit of close perseverance in An-
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ger and Hatred in the Prosecution of Revenge, by that of Fraud in Schemes of Deceit and Villainy, and suffering ourselves to indulge an uncharitable Bent in Slander, Detraction, harsh and injurious Expressions, and the like Excesses and Deviations from the Line of moral Rectitude. Youth has its own disorderly Affections, Manhood has others, and old Age itself is not exempt from them, appropriated to the Evening of Life. In fine, we feel within ourselves a secret Impulse and Desire to act in all Things according to the Bent of some predominant Passion, and to seek not that which Faith, Hope and Charity inspire, to render us pleasing to God, and fit to partake one Day of his most blessed and eternal Kindom, but what is dictated by base Appetite, which only seeks for present sensible, but fleeting Happiness and Pleasures. To this Appetite we give the Name of *Concupiscence*, and it is nothing else, in fine, but our Self-Love, irregularly impelled, a Love which will not hearken to, but despises and smothers the Dictates of right Reason, placing Felicity where it is not, and contradicting the Will of God, to follow the evil and inordinate Direction of our own.

What Remedies are there then for this so blind and imprudent Love, from which no Person is free? Our holy Religion teaches us two of the chief and primary Class. The one must come immediately from God, and is the

the Aid of his powerful Grace. To obtain this *Prayer* is necessary. The other is the laborious Effort which the Christian must make, co-operating with the Grace of God, to enchain this wicked Adviser, or to regulate our Self-Love so properly, that it shall act in Concert and Harmony with the Love of God, that is, of the sovereign Lord and Master, whom we ought assuredly to love above all things, and by loving him in this manner, it is then, indeed, that we truly and wisely love ourselves, and effectually tend to our real Happiness. This Effort of holy Violence is called, *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, and is one of the most important and necessary Virtues of a Christian. As to *Prayer*, it is properly nothing else but an Address to God, to obtain his Assistance in our Necessities, and that he may grant us any Favour we want for our spiritual Life, as likewise the temporal. Now we must carefully remark, that this Exercise is not only useful and laudable, but even necessary, since without it, it would be impossible for us to avoid Sin, to possess and practice Virtue, and to guide our Souls safely to eternal Salvation. We have this Truth from the holy Scriptures, and it is one of the Dogmas of the holy Church. So great is certainly the Goodness of our Lord God, that he, of his own Accord, and without any previous Petition, dispenses innumerable Graces to whom he pleases among his Faithful,
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and sometimes even to Sinners themselves. And those we know not of are more in Number than those we do know. Nevertheless, this so kind and liberal Master desires, nay, commands, that we should ask of him continually Graces and Favours. We believe, and we know, that without the Assistance of God, we can do nothing that is good, as far as it regards our eternal Salvation, and to please him really and truly, so as to attain this great End ; nor can we hope to overcome Temptations, or to persevere in Righteousness, without he stretches forth his Hand with the Assistance of his Grace. As far as the matter regards ourselves, such is the Necessity we are under of imploring his Aid, beseeching and intreating him, by Prayer, who alone can grant it to us, and who thus intreated, will not deny it, on account of his infinite Bounty, and so strong an Inclination to Acts of Goodness and Beneficence. In consequence of this, his most blessed Son, among other things, in that most excellent of all Prayers, *The Lord's Prayer*, so called, has taught us to beseech his divine Father, *not to permit that we may fall into Temptation*. Besides this, he has assured us, that if we ask we shall obtain, and that we may ask with Confidence, because we shall be heard, which is alway to be understood, of those Gifts which are for the good of our Souls. For as to temporal Matters, God does that alone
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which he knows so much better than we do, whether it were better to grant, postpone, or refuse, and although it be not improper for a Christian to ask for them in his Necessities, yet should he not ask them, but that, in those Matters, the Will of God should be fulfilled, and not his own. In fine, the Apostle, because he knew that we continually stand in Need of divine Assistance, has exhorted us to pray without Intermission,* that is, to make it a Subject of frequent Exercise.

It is also proper to attend to the Documents and customary Practice of the Church, on this Head, as she is our Mistress in Prayer. It is certainly very good to address our Prayers to our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, even in Quality of Man, his divine Father has granted All Power in Heaven and on Earth, with a Power of dispensing to whoever believes in him really and truly, the Treasures of his Father, and the Kingdom of Heaven. To this our most loving Saviour we not only may, but ought to recur, and address him with entire Confidence, because, that in the midst of his Glory in Heaven, he still preserves for us, that immense Love which he demonstrated while he lived and conversed with Men on Earth, and precisely, on account of this incomparable Love, he comes to dwell among us, although invisibly, in the ineffable

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* 1st. to the Thessalonians, Chap. 5. Ver. 17.

Sacrament of the Altar. But the Christian should never forget, nay, he is always to have before his Eyes, the Rite of the holy Church, as well in the Mass, as in the Canonical Hours,* that is, to direct his Prayers to the eternal Father, as to the Source and Fountain of the Divinity, to ask of Him Favours, through the Merits of his most blessed Son, Jesus Christ, true God, and true Man.

These Merits are infinite, and the good Father we have in Heaven, hearing us ask in the Name of this his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, is so much the more disposed to hear our Prayers. The Church acknowledges, that all manner of Good, of Graces and Favours, which descend upon us from the bountiful Hand of him who created us, and maintains us in the World, is to be attributed as on account of Jesus Christ. For this Reason, when she directs her Prayers, and so often to God the Father, she always terminates them, by imploring the Accomplishment of them, through the Merits of *our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with him, together with the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.* The holy Virgin-Mother, and the Saints, when they pray for us, interpose with God the Father, not, indeed, with *their own Merits*, but the Efficacy of the Merits of our divine Saviour, as they well know, that Jesus Christ

* *The Office in the Breviary.*

Christ alone is our proper *Mediator*, (in the strict Sense of the Word,) and our proper Advocate with the Father, who renders Him propitious to us, for the Remission of our Sins. *St. Augustine* says, that the Saints pray in Heaven just as they did on Earth, that is, giving Weight and Influence to their Prayers, by the Mediation of that Saviour, from whom, and on whose Account, all manner of Good descends upon us. He himself has taught us such a manner of praying, when he said, *I have chosen you, that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my Name, He may give it you.** He has also dictated from his own Mouth a most excellent Prayer, that is, the *Pater noster*, to be addressed to his heavenly Father, which may be termed the Queen of all Prayers.

The Duty of Prayer may be performed at Home, or in any retired Place. God is every where, and gives Audience in every Place, to whoever has Recourse to him, as he willingly receives, through his infinite Goodness, the Petitions of all who stand in Need of Him; and thus, even in a retired part of our Dwellings, our Prayer will be laudable and useful. However, the most proper Place, and in a particular Manner destined for Prayer, is the holy House of God, where he especially erects the Throne of his Majesty and Clemency, to
hearken

* Gospel of S. John, Chap. 15. Ver. 16.

hearken to the Petitions of his People. The Presence of his most blessed Son, under the sacramental Veils, will serve to excite and awaken our Devotion, and keep us within all the due bounds of reverential Attention; this is the more necessary, as the grand Preliminary of Prayer is a strong and lively Apprehension of the Presence of God, and afterwards to repose an entire and unlimited Confidence in his almighty Power, to the utter Exclusion of our own Strength and Ability. Many Words are not necessary to pray well, nor laboriously refined Sentiments, or ingenious Assemblage of Thoughts and Expressions. This our divine Master has told us, not indeed, that a Prayer precisely because it is long displeases God, but in order that we may not rest our Confidence to obtain what we desire, in the pomp and multiplicity of Words, as if God did not know our Wants, and were obliged to surrender only to the Force of our Eloquence, and the obstinate Assaults of the Tongue. An ignorant Person who is devout, and knows but the Lord's Prayer, a Prayer worth a whole Volume of Prayers, may pray, and hope to obtain as much as the most learned and eloquent, because the Heart speaks with infinitely more Power to God than the Tongue. And certainly we should All present ourselves before Him with an humble Heart, acknowledging our Weakness, asking and hoping for Aid in our Temptations, and
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in those various Dangers by which we may be beset every Moment, with filial Confidence; as likewise for Mercy and Pardon for our past Transgressions. I have said, that the holy House of God is the most proper Place for Prayer, where the People may address themselves to Him in private, as well as at other Times unite themselves with the Ministers of the Church, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and other sacred Functions. Whoever goes there to request an Audience of the Almighty, if he thoroughly reflects upon his Duty, will soon know and feel an innate Conviction, what Modesty, Composure, and Humility of Mind and Appearance are, in all Reason and Propriety, requisite in him, who has the high Honour of being admitted to present Memorials, Requests, and Petitions, to ask for Favours from the most High, whom, if we behold not with the Eyes of our Body, we certainly behold with those of our Faith, as really and actually present, and listening to our Supplications. It is not easy to be wanting in Respect, or to commit any Acts of Irreverence, for whoever considers but ever so little, that he is in the very Seat and Palace of God, of a God who penetrates into the darkest and inmost Recesses of our Hearts, and who, as He is entirely willing and ready to confer Graces and Favours on whoever recurs to him, with an humble Confidence, on the other Hand, knows well how to chastise and

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punish those who, either through Pride, Vanity, want of sufficient Faith, or a criminal thoughtless Levity, seem to forget that they are in that holy House, destined, after a particular manner, to the Adoration and Glorification of that supreme and sovereign Lord and Master of All, from whom we have received all we possess, and whose Aid is necessary to us at every Moment.



CHAPTER XI.

*On Adoration, Thanksgiving, and other Ali-
ments of true Piety.*

GOD has made a vast Multiplicity of Creatures on the Earth, but to Man alone, as being created to his own Image and Likeness, and endowed with a rational Soul, He has granted Understanding to know his great Creator. Of this we are assured, not only by Faith, but also by our own natural Reason. If we then know, although imperfectly, this our first Beginning and last End, that is, Him who has placed and maintains us in the World, who has us before his Eyes at every Time and in every Place, hence arises a plain and evident Obligation, on the Part of every Individual of us, to make known to Him our Submission, as to the Lord of All,
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and our Gratitude, as to our great and signal Benefactor. And as there is not a single moment in which we do not experience some Effect or other of his loving Kindness, in defending us from Dangers, in preserving our Health, in giving us our daily Sustenance, and in so many other Favours, spiritual or temporal, it is surely but just and reasonable, that our Gratitude should often be exercised, and our Thanksgivings frequent, to the Fountain of all Good. For this End, even from our tender Years, we learn to recite some Prayers, and chiefly the Lord's Prayer, in which is all that the most excellent Affections of the Heart can excite, and all that we can most piously desire, to be laid before the Throne of the Almighty. Children, indeed, may sometimes recite only by rote and custom, while their little Minds are otherwise employed, in those light and trivial Thoughts natural to their Years. But it were surely shameful in the Adult to imitate them in this respect, and pay this Tribute to God without due Reflection and Attention. We ought every Morning, either retired at Home, or in the holy House of God, to prostrate ourselves before God, before the most Holy and most Glorious Trinity, that great God, who fills all Space with his infinite Majesty, who beholds All, throughout the Universe, from whom nothing can be hidden, with a lively Conception of his Presence, and raising up
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our Thoughts from this Earth to Him, with an ardent Intention of adoring and loving Him, praising and blessing Him, desiring his Glory, giving Thanks to Him for past Favours, and asking for new, with Christian Hope and Confidence. We ought to humble ourselves, with the most profound Submission, before this mighty Monarch, in all things, confessing, with internal Conviction, our Nothingness, our Weaknesses, and our continual Want of his Lights, his Graces, and then to raise up our Minds to consider the unspeakable Grandeur and Greatness of this King of Kings, to his Sanctity, his Amiability and Clemency, to hope from him every thing for the good of our Souls, and also for the wise and prudent Regulation of our temporal and worldly Affairs.

It is, in like manner, the Duty of every good Christian, that he should present himself every Night before his heavenly Father, to attest to him his Gratitude for the Benefits and Favours hitherto conferred upon him, and particularly during the Course of the Day just closed. We do not know, not even the thousandth part of them. And how could he ever excuse his Inattention and Ingratitude, who, although he has received, in a Superior Degree, a bright Genius, Abilities to fill considerable Stations with Honour, Talents to conciliate Respect, or enjoys good Health, possesses a wise and amiable Wife, obedient and dutiful

dutiful Children, has holy Inspirations, received a good Education, and so many other Advantages; yet, after all, should so little remember the Author and Giver of so much Good, so many Acts of Kindness, nor ever thank Him, with all the due Fulness of Gratitude! It would be still worse, if those who are so highly favoured, should attribute to their Birth, their Industry, or to the vain and wandering Name of Fortune, the Acquisition and Possession of these Gifts. Their Pride and Ingratitude would well deserve, that God should strip them of All. Little, therefore, is necessary to understand, the so clear and necessary Obligation of those who are endowed with Reason, and chiefly those who profess the Law of Christ, of making frequent Acts of fervent and heart-felt Adoration, Praise, and Thanksgiving, to so bountiful, so generous a Giver. The wise Christian ought also, every Day, to bring to his Remembrance our divine Saviour, through whom every Grace is, has proceeded, and ever continues to be conferred on us. We ought to adore Him most fervently, we should protest to Him our Love, our grateful Sentiments, and a true and sincere Desire to confirm our Love by our Deeds and Actions. Blessed are we, indeed, if we have Jesus Christ on our Side. One of the most substantial and highly useful Modes of Devotion in the Church of God, is *Psalmody*; that is, the singing or reciting of

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Psalms, to which Hymns may be added, in the House of God to his Honour. Of this we have an excellent Treatise, in Latin, of the pious Cardinal *Bona*. Antiquity, and that too very remote, strongly recommends this Custom. Among the primitive People of God, Psalms, Hymns, and Canticles, were in great and common Use, Part of which, preserved for us by the Care of divine Providence, serve even now for Nutriment to Christian Piety. We see likewise that *S. Paul*, at the very Commencement of Christianity, inculcated to us this Custom, as also the singing of Hymns to God, when he said, *Speaking to yourselves in Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual Canticles, singing and making Melody in your Hearts to the Lord.** He repeats the same things elsewhere, adding, that the Heart should accompany the Voice and the Singing: § Thus, also, in another place he writes; *By Him, therefore, (Jesus Christ,) let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually, that is, the Fruit of Lips giving Glory to his Name.†* So that, besides the high Antiquity of this Rite, we know likewise, that it comes from God, when we see that the Prophets and the Apostles made use of it, and taught us to do the same. From hence are sprung the *Canonical Hours*, composed of Psalms, Hymns, Antiphons, Responsories, &c. and of Extracts from the

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* *To the Ephesians, C. 56. V. 19.* § *To the Colossians, Ch. 36. V. 16.* † *To the Hebrews, Ch. 13. V. 15.*

holy Scriptures, of both the Old and the New Testament, with the Expositions of the holy Fathers, which the antient Monks and Nuns, and afterwards the Canons, partly sung, and partly recited, in their respective Churches, which holy Custom was afterwards extended to all the Body of the Clergy, (in holy Orders) both Secular and Regular, some retaining the antient Custom of reciting the first Part of the Divine Office, (i. e. Matins,) at Midnight, and dividing the remainder through certain fixed Hours in the Day, and others performing this Duty, in various manners and times, with different, but ever laudable, Modes of Discipline.

Psalmody is a complete Collection of the pious Affections, which a devout Soul ought to conceive with respect to God, as well to celebrate his infinite Attributes, and honour him in the best manner we can here below, as to render him a just and grateful Tribute of Thanks, for all the Good which he has done to us, and to supplicate him for further Favours, in all our Wants and Necessities. Psalmody is comprehended under the Head of *Prayer*, of which we have spoken above. But even without *Vocal Prayer*, God may be praised and addressed, since he knows well how to read in our Hearts our Desires and Affections, nor does he stand in need of external Words, to understand what passes within us. Therefore, the Name of *Mental Prayer*

is given to that which devout Persons perform when, in the secret Recesses of the Mind and Heart, they speak with God, either at certain determinate Hours, or whenever the Impulse of their Devotion leads them to it. The Name of *Meditation* is rather more proper for this holy Exercise, because the principal part of it consists in meditating on the ineffable Attributes of God, the Life, and especially the Passion of our divine Saviour, with other most awful, important, eternal Truths, which all influence the spiritual Life of a Christian. It is impossible to conceive how much Utility will redound to whoever practises this holy Exercise, with a due and sufficient Fervour and Attention. It is then that the Soul unites herself with God; Then the so important Maxims of Faith and Christian Duties towards God are more strongly planted, and firmly rooted in the Hearts of the Faithful. It is surely sweet and pleasing thus to converse, (as we may say,) in private, with our invisible Monarch, and by this means some elected Souls have, sometimes, attained to taste, even in this mortal Life, part of those Joys which are reserved, in their Fulness, in Heaven for the Blessed. Nevertheless, we must here acknowledge, that few attend to Meditation in this perfect manner. He, who has not a Mind sufficiently roused to spiritual Matters, who knows not how to reflect with deep at-

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tention, nor is accustomed to maintain a regular uninterrupted Course of Reasoning on the Subject proposed, nor is properly conversant in the great Affairs of which he has to treat with God, soon finds himself disinclined to proceed, cold and indifferent, a Misfortune into which some may fall, who are even very expert in this Affair, on account of the wretched Condition of Humanity, which is always ready to sink, and with Difficulty can be raised and elevated, so as to keep ourselves, for any time, above the Thoughts of this World. Now, for such as those who know not, or have not Strength to practise so sublime an Exercise, they may, at least, (as is customary,) help themselves by the reading of many excellent Meditations, that pious Writers have set before us. In this manner they may reap much Profit, for an Aliment to their Piety. In fine, every Effort we make to contemplate on high, the Majesty and Perfection of God, to meditate upon his most holy Will expressed in his Law, and to consider all the wonderful things operated by Jesus Christ our Lord, for the Love of us poor Creatures, and to procure our Salvation: This will be all solid Devotion, and may efficaciously contribute to our eternal Welfare. We must nevertheless take Notice, that if our Meditation be not concluded with imploring the Assistance of God, so highly necessary to our Weakness, all our pious

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ous and devout Ideas will melt away like Snow before the Sun. Thus must it always finish, because of ourselves we can do nothing, but every thing by the divine Interposition.

We find ourselves here below on Earth, all immersed in worldly Cares, Pleasures, and Amusements, attentive to better our Condition here every Day as much as possible, full entirely of our worldly Interests, watchful to the last degree to preserve or increase our Patrimony, to acquire Honour and Reputation, to procure ourselves all the Advantages and Pleasures of this Life. And yet this World is to last but for so short a time for each Individual of us, we must leave it so soon, that we should not suffer it to gain so great an Ascendant over us, and this Departure too may very well happen when we least expect it. Wherefore, wise is he who knows how sometimes to retire, as it were, out of this present World, to think deeply on the other, which is never to have an End. Wise is he who either of himself, or by the Assistance of some able Director, sets himself to meditate seriously for what End he came into this World, what he does here, and what End he may expect to make after the Course of this short Pilgrimage. It is certain, that the Experience of the last two Centuries makes it appear, that from the good daily use of this holy Exercise of Meditation, or at least from

one Day in each Month being set apart, for this salutary purpose, are frequently derived Amendment from Vice, Regularity of Morals, and an Increase of Piety, for whoever endeavours to profit by this wholesome Medicine of our Souls. *S. Paul* has advised and exhorted us to take it, when he said, that we ought to *renew* our Spirit from time to time, since that we are but too much inclined to spiritual Heaviness and Indifference here below, and while we eagerly pursue mere earthly and temporal Objects, we easily forget the Eternal.

We cannot sufficiently lament our extreme Carelessness, as to what regards the great, and capital Affair of our Souls. We know, and we believe, the awful and important Truths which Faith teaches us, and yet we think not of them, and, as if we knew nothing of them, we act quite opposite to what, if interrogated, we profess to believe. Can there be any thing more certain than Death, any thing more uncertain than the time of it? Even this Truth alone ought to keep us always on our Guard, always vigilant and prepared, as our Lord has so often told us in the Gospel, because that our Death, either in the Grace, or under the Displeasure of God, will decide an Eternity of Bliss or Misery for us. And yet, alas ! we poor unthinking Creatures, seldom or ever reflect upon this awful Truth, and we can behold the daily Deaths of so many others, without being

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moved to think properly on our own, although
 it be also inevitable, and, perhaps, even near
 to come to pass. We ought therefore,
 by close Meditation, by hearing the Word
 of God, not to criticise on Words or Phrases,
 but to improve; and by attentive reading
 of pious Books, to rouse ourselves effectually,
 to a due and proper Consideration of all the
 so interesting, solemn and important Truths,
 which our Faith proposes to our View. They
 are highly inexcusable, who, if they cannot
 get to hear a Preacher to their Mind, (as if
 the divine Word were good for nothing
 without human Embellishments,) spend the
 whole Sabbath-day in Idleness, in sauntering
 up and down in frivolous Visits, or, what is
 worse, in drinking to Excess, so as at length to
 exhibit a most brutal, disgusting and scanda-
 lous Appearance, even on the very Day of the
 Lord, together with all the vile and accursed
 Consequences of this so degrading Vice,
 such as Riots, Quarrels, Contentions, the
 most abominable and impious Oaths, Curses
 and Execrations, or in other shameful, un-
 becoming, and unchristian Abuses of a Day,
 so sacred, venerable and holy. Surely there
 are not wanting many Means of truly sanc-
 tifying the Sabbath, in Obedience to the au-
 gust and awful Commandment of the Al-
 mighty. It is surely highly shameful for a
 Christian, who has every Day such various
 Helps to become good and holy, to neglect

them with so much Indifference, because the present World so strongly engrosses all our Attention, when our future State ought, in all Reason, to appear to us as of infinitely more Importance.

CHAPTER XII.

On Mortification and Humility.

THE other Aid, of which we have said the Christian stands in Need, to sustain himself amidst the Temptations and Dangers which abound in the present Life, is the Virtue of *Mortification*. Holy *Job* says, *The Life of Man is a State of Warfare upon Earth*:* That is, a Situation wherein we must continually resist, as it were, Prosperity, lest it should transport us into Pride, Haughtiness, into Contempt and Oppression of others, and such like criminal Excesses, and bear up against Depression and Misery, that it may not hurry us into Complaints injurious to Providence, irreligious Impatience and Fretfulness, Theft, Fraud, dishonest Meanness, or similar Offences From Concupiscence, (taken in a general, *Theological* Sense,) is derived a secret Bent, to Vanity, to Luxury, irregular Desires of the

* *Job, Chap. 7. Ver. 1.*

the Flesh, to Avarice, to Intemperance, in fine, to seek for Pleasures, worldly Substance and Advancement, by any Means that may present themselves. These internal Impulses, if they tend to make us desire, or do things contrary to right Reason, and the Documents of the Gospel, are called *Temptations*, a Misfortune from which the greatest Saints are not exempt, and by the Shock of which, those Persons are very subject to fall, nay, frequently do so, who seldom think on a future State, being too much enamoured of the present. But the wise and true Christian, who has it ever in his Thoughts, that Vices and Sins do generally bring Chastisements and Punishments, of one kind or other, in their Train, even in the present Life, and will infallibly, in the next, meet with their just Reward, and that the practical Love of Virtue, is the only Road whereby we can attain any pure, unmixed Felicity here below, and that which is unspeakably compleat and perfect in Heaven; knows, likewise, the Necessity of a continual Combat against the internal Suggestions of inordinate Self-Love and Concupiscence. And in what Manner? By a customary Self-Denial, by subduing and repressing the Tendency of his own Will, the moment he discovers that the Law of God and right Reason command or counsel the contrary, with a firm Persuasion, that all that is commanded by God to us, is

for our own real substantial Good ; while on the other Hand, whatever our animal Appetites or Desires, Ambition, Avarice, Hatred, and the like irregular, inordinate Affections, urge us to, is entirely to our own real Hurt and Prejudice, with respect to our Reputation, Character, Health, Substance, or else is an unjustifiable Attack upon our unoffending Neighbour, or if offending, punishes ourselves, by filling our Minds with all the corrosive Uneasiness of Rancour and Bitterness ; but what is more to be attended to, offends and displeases the Almighty, whose Anger and Chastisements, surely, no silly Presumption will be bold enough to consider with a contemptuous Coolness and Indifference.

This Combat against our own corrupt Will, this Mortification of the Passions, which would draw us to the Commission of Actions, disgraceful to the Dignity of Man, as being so highly necessary for us, has been strongly recommended to us by our divine Master, when he said, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.** The more we advance in this Exercise, the more strengthened we become, in the way of Salvation. For this the Apostle declared, *They that are Christ's, have crucified their Flesh with the Vices and Concupiscences.†* One of the four principal moral Virtues

* S. Matth. Chap. 16. Ver. 24.

† S. Paul to the Galatians, Ch. 5. Ver. 24.

Virtues is *Temperance*; we may stile Mortification the Daughter thereof, and he who has this, possesses the former in Perfection. Nor is this, indeed, a Combat but of a few Days. The Saints themselves, although, by passing through so many Trials unhurt and victorious, they have formed a Habit and a great Facility to overcome any Temptation; yet, for the whole Course of their Lives, they ought to stand ready in Arms for the Combat; because the Enemy, whether external or internal, is at all Times like a Lion, seeking whom he may devour, nor is he ever totally discouraged, although so often subdued and overcome. Nor is this a Virtue solely reserved for the Inhabitants of Cloisters or Deserts. All Christians whatsoever are indispensably bound to possess and practice it, if they really aspire to the Attainment of the eternal Kingdom of God. But Youth stands more especially in Need of it, and yet how seldom attended to, at that time of Life. Let us look to Children, even at the most tender Age: We see them eager to have their own Will in all things, so early does the Spirit of Disobedience shew itself in them. Were it not for Force and Constraint, we should see them, even then, committing many Faults to destroy their Health, endanger their Limbs, and hurt themselves in many a Manner, besides manifesting the little Seeds of many evil Propensities. As they grow up,
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their Passions grow up and increase along with them, and as they want Prudence, when they overlook and despise the Counsels and Advice of their wise and provident Friends, without in the least caring to bridle their irregular Appetites, and quite intent and eager in the Pursuit of their Pleasures, without ever examining how illicit and sinful they are, they throw themselves headlong into a thousand Precipices, they commit numberless unjustifiable Actions, hurtful to themselves, and injurious to the public Good. Happy therefore are those Youths, who early learn to carry the Yoke of Docility and Obedience, to those who know how to point out to them, the true, wise and prudential Course of Life they ought to pursue. Wise and estimable are those young Men, who eagerly study the ways of true Sagacity and Temperance, and, hearkening with Submission to the Voice of God, our supreme Lord and Director, and to those who are entrusted with the Care of them on Earth, soon comprehend and feel, with entire Conviction, that their true and solid Good consists in doing that which the Law of God commands, and what right Reason approves. *Solomon*, therefore, chose to address his *Proverbs* to the Young in particular, and would to God they loved the reading of them, for this is the School, where even God himself is the Master. We have on this Subject a most useful Work of
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Father Scupoli, a *Theatine*, entitled, *The Spiritual Combat*, which contains excellent Documents, as likewise, *The safe Way to Paradise*, a much esteemed Treatise of Father Segala, a *Capuchin*, wherein is diffusively taught, the signal Profit that results from Self-Denial. Above all, the Work of Father *Alphonso Rodriguez*, entitled, *The Exercises of Christian Virtues*, will be highly useful, especially where he treats of *Mortification*, to see clearly, and to full Conviction, that without the Practise of this Virtue, no adult Christian can make any Progress in his spiritual Advancement, much less attain to Perfection; because there will ever be Temptations, and whoever wishes to overcome them, must use a holy Violence over himself, which has been signified to us by our Lord; when he said, *The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and the Violent bear it away.** Hence it is, that in religious Orders, Novices are carefully trained up in Self-Denial, that is, in the Exercise of Mortification, as it is but too certain, that if our Self-Love be not early accustomed to surrender to Reason, and to the Will of God, it may, like a pampered Courser, hurry us away from the right Road, and expose us to be dashed to Pieces down a thousand Precipices, and this too, at every Moment.

Mortification comprehends a large and extensive Province, because it not only signifies
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* S. Mat. Chap. 11. Ver. 12.

the Restraint of the Appetites and Passions, when they urge us to Actions which are contrary to Reason, to the Law of God, and to the Decrees of the Church ; but likewise extends to the Chastisement of this Body, which, according to the Apostle, weighs down the Soul, and transports her to Intemperance in eating and drinking, and other illicit Pleasures, which we call corporal, although the Pleasure is only felt by the Soul. Happy is he who is attentive, in all respects, not to displease Him in any thing, who wishes us all to be just and holy for our own Good. But we shall never arrive to profit sufficiently in this so necessary a School for Christians, if we have not the Foundation of another important Virtue, a Virtue but very little known, and less practised in the ancient Heathen World, and not even by their Philosophers, who studied and laboured so much in the Inculcation of Virtue, Wisdom, and Morality. I speak of *Humility*, which is properly a *Christian* Virtue, and of such Importance, that without this Disposition of the Mind, united with Charity, we could challenge no real Merit from those other Virtues, which, perhaps, might be found in us, for they will not be true and substantially conducive to Salvation, if unaccompanied with the Love of God, and a lowly Opinion of ourselves, by which we behold our own native Poverty and Wretchedness, our own Nothingness,

thingness, before the great Lord of All: What Good can the proud Man ever possess, or hope to obtain? God has protested that he hates him, and loves the humble. And although our divine Master has taught us, both by Word and Example, all Christian Virtues, yet he has especially and in particular desired, that we should *learn of him to be mild and humble of Heart*,* if we wish to enjoy any Tranquillity of Mind in this Life. For the Proud and the Ambitious are never at rest, they are ever unsatisfied with themselves and with others; where the humble Man is loved and esteemed by every body, the proud Man, whether he knows it or not, is hated by All. A very little Reflection then will suffice, to make us understand how just and reasonable it is, that we should conceive an humble and modest Opinion of our Persons, our Merits, our Talents, our Qualities of every kind. If it should appear to us, that we possess a bright Genius, and profound Learning, (of which in reality we always have less than we imagine,) if we are in the Enjoyment of a dignified Station, Wealth, Beauty, Health, great Connexions, &c. are not all these, and any other Advantages that can be named, the Gifts of the kind and merciful Liberality of God, who has enriched us therewith, which so many others do not possess, perhaps, more deserving of them than

* S. Matthew, Chap. 11. Ver. 29.

than we are? He can too take them all away from us in a Moment. Dangers, Sickneſs, and other Misfortunes we need not go in ſearch of to other Countries. Wherefore, let him who imagines that he is not ſo proud as he really is, of his own Merits, of his Wealth and Opulence, his high Birth, of his Wiſdom, Sagacity and Penetration of Mind, and other mental or corporal Qualities, let him, if he dares, deny that he has his own Defects, and, perhaps, greater than thoſe of others, that he has committed many Follies and Errors in the Courſe of his Life, and is ſtill capable of committing them every Day, that he is ſubject to Sickneſs, Diſeaſe, Loſs of Property or Character, and numberleſs unforeſeen and unexpected Diſaſters, that are common enough in our preſent State of Exiſtence. With what Reaſon then can he be ſo lofty-minded, to look down upon others, and think every thing due to his own extraordinary Merits? It is certain, that if God chuſes to exert his Mercy towards thoſe Idols of Pride and Vanity, he will ſend them ſome diſagreeable Accident to make them diſcover their Folly and open their Eyes, and if not before Death, at leaſt, will teach them, in ſine, to know what they are, but without being able to profit any more by ſo ſalutary a Leſſon.

This Subject is of great Extent, and treated of by many ſpiritual Writers, for which
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reason I shall content myself with congratulating him who has well planted in his Heart, the beautiful Virtue of Humility, so pleasing to God, and loved in others, even by the proudest themselves. Let us consider Persons of the former Stamp. In the midst of Prosperity, in the possession or increase of Dignities, Honours, and worldly Blessings of every kind, their Condition may be changed, but their Mind not in the smallest Degree, always persevering in the same lowly, humble Opinion of themselves. Never do they glory in, or are swelled with the Idea of their present Felicity, because they always consider it, in every respect, as a gratuitous Gift of God, and they are persuaded, that he can resume all these Favours when he pleases, as they are but lent, not given away entirely, to us on Earth. If Adversities or Misfortunes approach, he who is truly humble, easily bending himself to Patience, does not murmur, nor is he fretful at the divine Will or Permission, but acknowledging himself worthy to be treated in this manner, and that God mortifies to revive us, disposes his Mind to suffer patiently the Chastisements of so good and so wise a Father. Above all, by willing Sufferings for his Love, he remembers what *S. Paul* says, that *the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory to come, that shall be revealed*
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*in us.** In fine, the humble Man knows how to bear with Insults, Affronts, Sickness, disagreeable Accidents, Loss of Substance, and the like, and when his last Hour approaches, as he knows full well, that he came into this World to quit it some time or other, whenever the Lord of All shall think fit, he not only prepares for this Journey, with an unlimited Resignation to his Will, but even with Pleasure and Exultation, because he knows how great the Mercy of God is, and that a Departure from this Life puts an End to Miseries, and is the Beginning of eternal, unchangeable Bliss and Glory. To conclude then, how much more the Christian shall forward himself in the Way of Humility, and shall be attentive to mortify his Body, but incomparably much more his own Self-Conceit and Self-Love, so much with greater certainty may it be said, that he walks well before God, nay tends to Perfection. As to what regards, however, the Mortification of the Body, Prudence should carefully regulate it. Moderate fasting is that Species of Chastisement to our Flesh, which is both praised and commanded by the Church. Other Modes may be also adopted by Discretion; Imprudence and excessive ill-timed Austerities, may be productive of much Harm, and it will be always proper to advise, on this Head, with a wise and experienced Director. *St.*

Philip

* *To the Romans, Chap. 8. Ver. 18.*

Philip Neri, an excellent Guide in these respects, as we have it in his Life, *esteemed more those, who attending moderately to the Mortification of the Body, employed all their Care and Vigilance in mortifying, principally, the Will and the Understanding, than those who applied themselves solely and only to corporal Austerities.*

CHAPTER XIII.

On the Sacrament of Penance, Its Necessity and Utility; and on Patience.

THE Means hitherto pointed out to avoid Evil and do Good, are indubitably both holy and useful; but because human Nature, in our present State, is but too frail and inclined to Evil, we are, nevertheless, in consequence of our extreme Weakness, exposed to many Falls, and Transgressions of the Law of God. We were wretched indeed, if the divine Mercy had not provided us with other Means of Aid, still more strong and powerful, as well to make us rise again, as to acquire thereby greater Strength in future; in fine, all that may be wanting, on various Occasions, of divers Species of Grace to foment and nourish
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our spiritual Life. Our kind and merciful Creator has instituted two Means most powerful in these respects, by which the Acquisition of his eternal Kingdom is rendered very easy to us. In these, if we have a mind and know how to make a proper use of them, is found a firm and solid Foundation of Christian Hope. The one is the Sacrament of Penance: The other is the Sacrifice of the Mass, with the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is certain, that these are the chief and principal Treasures of Christian Devotion, and the most fruitful Sources of the Grace of God, so much the more excellent and worthy of our Veneration, as the most merciful Institutor of them has placed them within the Reach, as well of the lowest, as the higher Ranks of Mankind, of the Ignorant, as well as of the Learned. What, nevertheless, gives the greatest Value to them, is in their own intrinsic Excellence. By Prayer alone, whether public or private, much, indeed, may be obtained from the Most High; but we are to take Notice, that this will be in Proportion to the Faith and Disposition of him who prays. But here there is more, because God not only grants a Reward in Proportion to the greater or lesser Devotion of him who recurs to this Treasure, but adds thereto, by his own mere Liberality, an Overflow of Grace, so that the Means held out to us by his Bounty, may
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be the more honoured, and the Faithful, be the more strongly incited to make use of them, for their own Good. For this reason the Church so much recommends the Use and Frequentation of these two Sacraments; the Matter too is clear enough in itself, since that without them we cannot be saved, and on the other hand, by approaching them with all due Fervour, we may draw down upon ourselves the Plenitude of heavenly Blessings. There are Books without Number which treat of those two most holy Sacraments in a special and particular Manner. as likewise of the Sacrifice of the Mass; Preachers also frequently make of them the Subjects of their Sermons. Let me be permitted, nevertheless, to touch a little on this so important a Matter, since that from the good and proper use of them true Devotion depends, in a very particular and special manner. Let us begin with the Sacrament of Penance.

I do not intend here to speak of those who lead a mere brutal Life, and reflect but little, whether there be a God, a punisher of the Wicked, or a Soul, which after the Death of the Body will still continue to be in Existence. Such People think still less on the Tribunal of Penance. Neither do I speak of others deeply plunged in the inveterate Habit of some mortal Sin, but in whose Hearts some little Remains of the Fear of God residing

siding, lead them sometimes to the Confessional, but altogether indisposed to profit by it. Perhaps, indeed, they may obtain a kind of useless Absolution, by fraudulent Means, by imposing on some Minister of God; but can they flatter themselves, that God too, will extend his merciful Hand over him, who, with counterfeit Sorrow, because not really felt at the Heart, and for the most part, with false Promises, as easily broken as made, deceives both the Priest and himself? I speak then of the Christian who, with an upright Intention, goes to confess his Offences, is truly sorry for them, and resolved upon Amendment. For such, indeed, God throws wide open the Gates of Mercy. Were our Transgressions ever so grievous and numerous, we are assured, by that kind and merciful God, who neither can nor will deceive us, that he will treat us as a good and loving Father. He does great wrong to so transcendently good a Father, a Father, indeed, by Excellence, who, after a sincere and affectionate Avowal of his Sins, and his Sorrow for them, is still harrassed with Anxiety and Trepidation, for fear that God has not forgiven him. We should, surely, have no Diffidence in the Clemency and Goodness of our supreme Lord and Master, which is unlimited and boundless, for what is past, and which we have in the Sincerity of our Hearts, detested at the Tribunal of Penance.

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We should only have a Diffidence of ourselves, for the Remainder of our Life, in order that we may never desist from recommending ourselves, by Prayer, to Him who is ready to support us on all Occasions by his Grace, when we duly implore it. So that the Apprehension and Shame of our past Rebellion and Iniquity should not dishearten us. It is certain, that our most merciful Lord wishes nothing more than that we should return to him with true Repentance, and a sincere Determination of loving and obeying him for the future ; this being done, our Peace is made, and our Care afterwards, should only be to maintain our Fidelity towards so good and generous a Lord and Father.

Another kind of Persons, very numerous in the Church of God, approach the Tribunal of Penance ; that is, those who bring thither not grievous, but venial Sins, and various Defects, to which, indeed, every one is subject. As the Ministers of God are, at the same time, both Judges and Physicians of the Soul, it is easy to conceive what Profit may be obtained by consulting with a wise and experienced Director. Sermons may also be of very great Use, because the Preachers expose Vice in all its native Colours of Deformity, and with lively Descriptions set before us, the Criminality and Folly of our Deviations from Morality. It is only necessary that each Hearer should take something to himself, and

and then, if he loves God and his Soul, he will immediately think of Reformation and Amendment. But the particular secret Exposition of the true internal State of the Soul, made by the Minister of God at Confession, is much more likely to dispose and influence us to a better Care of our future moral Conduct. With the Aid of a good Counsellor, how many Temptations are overcome, how many Dangers avoided, how many Errors are corrected! For which Reason, if sacramental Confession be necessary to enter anew into the Grace and Friendship of God, it will be also most useful to preserve ourselves therein, and even to tend to Perfection. Here, nevertheless, it is proper to reflect, that there are two Ends to be answered in the Institution and Use of so important a Sacrament; that is, to regain the lost Grace of God, by the means of a cordial Repentance of past Transgressions; and secondly, a sincere Protestation of future Amendment. Now, it is not very difficult for us to fulfil the former. Persuaded, and struck by the infinite Goodness of God, our heavenly Father, we easily conceive a Sorrow for our past Sins, and a just Confidence, that to our Sorrow Pardon will be annexed on the Part of God. But how is the other End answered? So many Confessions are made, and yet so little Amendment! We have a Devotion to appease the Wrath of the Almighty, and none remains to preserve ourselves

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selves from offending and irritating Him
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 chiefly exacted and expected by the Lord
 from him, who by so much Clemency and
 Mercy has been reinstated in his Grace and
 Favour. But, alas! We, unthinking Crea-
 tures, precisely, because we find God so mer-
 ciful, so ready to pardon, encourage ourselves
 in a manner to think nothing of returning to
 our former Offences. Nor do we advert to
 the intolerable Abuse we make of the Pati-
 ence of God, by making the very Tribunal
 of his Mercy and Favour as a strange kind of
 License to the Continuation of our Vices, nor
 what an Insult we offer to Him when we act
 so preposterously, merely because he is kind
 and good, and prone to Mercy and Forgive-
 ness. If we reflect but for a little, seriously,
 upon so highly injurious and affrontful Ingrat-
 itude, we cannot, surely, but feel some pro-
 per Sense of it, if the Voice of Faith make
 itself be heard in any Degree. But it is pre-
 cisely because this Faith is weak in us, and
 because, certainly, we do not love the Lord
 our God in earnest, nor even know how to
 entertain a wise Love of ourselves; hence it
 is, that we combat so very faintly with our
 Vices, and suffer them to obtain the Ascendant
 in our Hearts.

Another Consideration to which we should
 carefully attend is, that whoever is conscious
 of having grievously offended God, in the

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Transgression of his Law, not only should be more vigilant than others, to avoid Relapses, but is likewise obliged to produce *worthy Fruits of Penance*. This is the Doctrine of all the holy Fathers, who knew, that the Life of a Christian ought to be a continual Penance, as well to atone for past Offences, as to avoid a Repetition of them. Prayer, Fasting, Alms-deeds, and other Works of Mercy, of Mortification, and of Devotion, ought to form the daily Occupation of him who remembers, that he has frequently abandoned the Lord his God, to flatter and indulge his irregular and inordinate Passions. The Servant who has fled away basely from his Master, the more kind and forgiving he finds him at his Return, so much the more eagerly does he strive to prove his renewed Fidelity, firm and unalterable; and, by his extraordinary Assiduity in patient Toil and Labour, to account for the Chastisement he so well deserved. But the World shews us in general quite the contrary. Penance and Mortification are, indeed, to be found, but among whom? Among some innocent, good and virtuous Persons, who live in and out of Cloysters and Convents, and in vain shall we search for those Virtues in so many others, who, however conscious of numberless Outrages committed against God, yet are not in the least alarmed, and breathe nothing but Vanity, Diversions and Pleasures, who think they have done enough, indeed,

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if they have exhibited some little outward Humiliation in imploring Pardon from God. The Day will come, and perhaps soon, when they shall envy, but in vain, the Lot of those who have always faithfully served God, or else, by penitential Works, have drawn down upon themselves all the Abundance of his Mercies.

We must, nevertheless, confess, that our natural Inclination leads us to desire, not indeed, any Matters of Trouble and Vexation, Heaviness of Mind and Constraint of the Senses, but quite the Reverse; thus we love but little, and practise less, the Works of Penance. What then does God? Since we will not learn to mortify ourselves, to make Amends for our past Sins, and prevent a Repetition of them, He takes upon himself the Care of mortifying us, and making us do Penance whether we will or not. War, Famine, Storms, Pestilence, invade us. We meet with Inundations, Fire, Losses and Damages of every Kind, Family Distresses, Discord, Quarrels, Contentions, Misery and Wretchedness, not to mention the frequency of Sicknes and Disease. But how can we enumerate all the Evils we may meet with in this World? And who is he that can boast an Exemption from all of them? Now, if we were not in a Condition when we came into the World, to reflect upon the Intention of God in all these Matters; surely, Now, we can well do it, that we are

no longer in a State of Infancy. It has been an Act of his Goodness to us, that He, in preference to so many others, has sent us to live, for Example, in a fruitful Country; but if we find here, nevertheless, many Evils to suffer, we have yet no solid reason to complain, if animated with the Spirit of Religion, of being obliged to bear with them, if they should even surpass the good things we enjoy in this our Place of Trial and of Pilgrimage. The good, the wise and virtuous Man, whose Heart is full of Humility, lifts up his Eyes on high, and as he knows that he has entered into the possession of many good things, still, with the Alloy of various Evils, to which every one is daily exposed, he adores, with the most reverential silent Submission, the Will of the Most-High, and this Will he has invariably proposed to himself throughout Life, for the Regulation of his own. How much more, indeed, should this Lesson of entire Submission be put in practice by him, who has much, very much, to account for with God, and feels a stinging Remorse of Conscience for many and grievous Offences committed against him? Does he know whether he has deserved a Chastisement or not? If he knows and acknowledges it, he is wise, if he pays *willingly* in this Life, a Debt, the Payment of which would cost him so much more in the next, and accepts, with a resigned humble Heart, the Penance which God has

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imposed upon him, and makes him perform, since he himself never chose to begin this necessary Work.

This willing Resignation, or as we may call it, filial Submission to the Adversities of this Life, because they are permitted by the Almighty, to form a part of that System, and enter into that plan of Government, by which He rules the World, is one of the finest and most important Virtues of a Christian, and is called *Patience*, of which we have already spoken; and I beg Leave to add a little more on this Subject. *We glory in Tribulations,* (says the Apostle,) *because we know that Tribulation produceth Patience.** Would to God that every one of us could say as much with Truth and Sincerity, and rejoice therein as often as we are in a suffering Situation, our Intention being really to suffer for the Love of God! Thus would we act like all the Saints that ever lived. We have surely a Leader, who is gone before us, and by the Example of his Labours and Sufferings, has taught us all to bear our Cross. *Christ hath suffered for us,* (says St. Peter,) *leaving us an Example that we may follow his Footsteps.†* Let us then have Courage in Sickneses, and in the midst of so many other Adversities and Tribulations, which may happen in the Life of Man. The more Occasions we shall have

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* *To the Romans, Chap. 5, Ver. 3.*

† *1st. Epist. Chap. 2. Ver. 21.*

to endure and suffer here below for the Love of God, so much the more shall we rejoice hereafter in Heaven. *Blessed are they who now mourn, for they shall be comforted.** Our divine Redeemer, with these so consoling Words, inspires every one in Tribulation and Distress with Courage and Fortitude. And we may attain to the Merit and Perfection of not only patient, but willing, and even chearful Suffering, if we possess a strong and lively Faith in the magnificent Promises of our God, who is Infallibility itself, an ardent Hope to arrive to the Enjoyment of his Kingdom, keeping always that Road which is the most secure and certain above all others to attain thereto, and continually fomenting in our Hearts, that true Love of God which can, and will infallibly, render not only light, but even sweet and pleasing any Tribulation, Death itself not excepted. We ought, surely, to be most firmly persuaded and convinced, that the Almighty Wisdom knows better than we can pretend to, what is truly necessary and needful to us, to embrace Virtue, shun Vice, and keep us in the way of Salvation; and that we speak most absurdly, and with very short-sighted Views of our own poor wretched Prudence and Wisdom, when we presume to murmur against the ever wise and adorable Designs of Providence. In reality we plainly see, by Experience, the Touchstone of Truth, that

* St. Matthew, Chap. 5. Ver. 5.

that worldly Prosperity most commonly leads to Prevarication on our part, when on the contrary, the healing Hand of Affliction, by humbling us, and opening our Eyes, makes us enter into ourselves, and search for that God, our only true and substantial Good, whom, alas! we so inconsiderately had forgotten in the Sunshine of Prosperity. But Nature is so corrupt, that we would wish the way to Heaven strewed with Flowers, whatever noxious Qualities they may internally possess, and not with those disagreeable, yet salutary and necessary, Thorns we so often meet in the way. We every Day repeat the Lord's Prayer, wherein we profess to desire, that the Will of God, our good heavenly Father, may be done in all Things; and yet, upon the Proof, we too often desire, that our own, and not His, should be put in Execution. Oh! how blessed is he who strongly feels in the bottom of his Heart a true unceasing Conformity with the divine Will! Let what has been said suffice for the Subject of the *necessary Devotion* of the Sacrament of Penance, and of the Virtue of Patience. Let us now pass on to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, to treat also, at the same time, of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

 CHAPTER XIV.

On the Holy Mass, and its concomitant Qualities.

IN order sufficiently to comprehend the superior Excellence of the holy Mass, it is necessary, in the first place, to observe, that although many Exercises and particular Practices of Devotion, have been introduced, from time to time, by the Zeal of the fervent Servants of God, which have certainly had many good Effects, in awakening the Attention and Devotion of the Faithful, yet not one of them can ever be compared to **THIS SIGNAL MODE OF DEVOTION**, instituted by God himself, and recommended to us by his own Mouth. The Mass is nothing less than a Renovation of the last Supper of our divine Master and Redeemer Jesus Christ, when he himself in Person, consecrated the Bread and Wine, dispensing to his Apostles his Body and Blood, under the sacramental Species, that is, the very same Body which was, shortly after, to undergo so many Torments from the Jews, and the very same Blood, which he was, in his Passion, to shed for the Remission of our Sins. He then recommended, and commanded, that the Memory of this most holy Supper should be renewed among the Faith-

Faithful, when he said, *Do this in Memory of Me.* And that this was afterwards practised among the Apostles, we have the Testimony of *S. Paul* to the *Corinthians*, * where he speaks of the Devotion and Purity with which the Christian should approach the Table of the Lord. That this was then frequented, accompanied with Prayers, is deduced from the *Acts of the Apostles*.§ And this is the first important Consideration which a Christian should attend to, when he goes to present himself at this most sacred Function. Let him, on whom Religion has any Power or Influence, imagine with what Joy and Reverence he would be impressed, if he had been found worthy to have been admitted to that heavenly Banquet, and to receive from the Hands of our Redeemer himself, His most holy Body and Blood. Oh! how many are there, (says St. John Chrysostom to the People of Antioch,) *who ardently wish to have seen with their own Eyes, through an Impulse of devout Curiosity, the Person, the Face, the Garments, of Jesus Christ, living on Earth!*† But He answers, that when we approach the Celebration of the holy Mass, which is a daily Renewal of His Supper, in order likewise to partake of the Eucharist, we behold and find Himself really contained under the Sacrament of the Altar; and He grants to us, not only-

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* 1st. Ep. C. 11. V. 20. § C. 2. V. 42.

† Hom. 10th.

to see Him present, with the Eyes of Faith, but likewise to touch Him, and unite Him, by Communion, entirely with ourselves.

By the holy Mass, the Memory of our Lord's Supper is not only renewed, but also that his Passion, that is, the great and signal Proof of His incomparable and unspeakable Love for Mankind. St. Paul teaches this Truth, when he thus writes to the Corinthians, *As often as ye shall eat this Bread, and drink this Chalice, ye shall represent the Death of the Lord, until He shall again appear.** For which Reason, a Christian present at the holy Mass, should imagine to himself to be present on Calvary, at the great Tragedy of the Crucifixion and Death of the Lord, and to behold on the Altar, that precious Blood which He shed on the Cross for the Remission of our Sins, and for the Salvation of All, who should believe in him, and keep his holy Commandments. This is the true and only Sacrifice of Christians. Those who have a little Tincture of the Scriptures know, that from the Beginning of the World the Use of Sacrifice was introduced; that is, of Calves, Lambs, and other determinate Victims, acknowledging thereby the supreme Dominion of God over All Creatures, and signifying, by the slaying and offering those Victims, the internal Readiness and Promptitude of Man to give up his own Life, in like manner, to appease

* Chap. 11. Ver. 26.

pease the adorable Justice of God, or to maintain, to Death, his Honour and Glory. The Pagans themselves had their Sacrifices to obtain Favours from their false Gods; so natural and widely extensive was the Idea and Tradition, that Sacrifice was the most effectual Mode of Atonement, and to draw down Favours from above. But as the Scriptures and Fathers teach us, that the Sacrifices offered by the Children of Adam, and particularly by the Jewish People, were nothing else but Shadows and Figures of *that Sacrifice of Love* which took Place, when Jesus Christ, that innocent Lamb, of whom the Paschal Lamb, among the Jews, was a Figure, proceeded to suffer Death to satisfy, in our place, the divine Justice, to ransom unhappy Man from the Bondage of Sin, and to open the Gates of Heaven for all his true and faithful Followers. The Prophets had foretold, that all those bloody Sacrifices should cease, and be succeeded by one much more pure and spiritual; the Royal Psalmist had declared, that the *Messiah* should be a *Priest according to the order of Melchisedech*;* that is, of that King and Priest who offered to God, not slain Animals, but only Bread and Wine. Accordingly our Lord instituted His New Great Sacrifice with Bread and Wine, converting them, by His Almighty Power, into His own true Body and Blood.

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* *Psalm 119. Ver. 5.*

In whatever Place, when our divine Saviour is under the Sacramental Veils, whether in the Tabernacle, or exposed to the Adoration of the Faithful, or carried in Procession, or administered as a *Viaticum* to the Sick, there the Throne of Grace may be said to be erected. Then is the particular proper Time to venerate and adore the Great Mediator between God and Man, from whose Merits we must acknowledge that, we obtain whatever spiritual Good we possess, and all that we can ever hope to obtain. To depart from thence with His Blessing, is surely a sweet and pleasing Comfort, and may likewise be of great Use and Profit to our Souls. But nothing of all this is to be compared with the actual Celebration of the Holy Mass. For the Action of adoring, accompanying, and praying to, Jesus Christ in the Sacrament, out of the Mass, produces no other Fruit, or Merit, but in proportion to the greater or lesser Devotion that attends it. But the chief Value of the Holy Mass redounds upon the assisting Christian well disposed, and especially upon the celebrating Priest, the Minister of God and the People, *from itself and its own intrinsic Power and Influence*: that is, the Devotion and good Disposition of the Priest and People, are certainly very proper and useful to give Thanks to the Almighty for Benefits already received, and to implore them in future; but the Attainment of these Benefits is, beyond any
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Comparison, owing to the *internal Efficacy* of this unbloody Sacrifice itself, the Son of God having principally destined this most Holy Function, to apply a part of His infinite Merits to the celebrating Priest, and to the Faithful, for whom the Sacrifice is offered.

As then the Holy Mass must be acknowledged to be *the chief and principal Mode of Devotion* among all others whatsoever, as being the direct and immediate Institution of God himself, and because that nothing, most certainly, can be offered to God more acceptable than his own Son, become Man for our Love, it follows, of course, that this Victim must be of infinite and inestimable Value. But we must, however, subjoin, that this Value in the *actual Application* thereof, however great *in itself*, is confined and limited within certain bounds, known and ascertained by the Wisdom and Will of God. In the first Place, the holy Church, that is, the entire Universality of orthodox Christians, partakes thereof, for the Peace, Union and Exaltation of which Great Body, this unbloody Sacrifice is offered to the Almighty. The Faithful departed do also partake thereof, who are in a State to be relieved by the Prayers of the Living: And more than the rest do they enjoy this Benefit, for whom expressly, and by Name, the Sacrifice is offered. As for the Living, for whom the Priest, in this latter manner, officiates, it is certain, that the Holy
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Mass can, and does procure, great and signal Favours and Benefits, if no Impediment subsists on their own Part, although they do not assist in Person at the Sacrifice. This personal Attendance, (if it be not impracticable,) is, with great Probability, highly conducive to draw down greater Blessings and Favours from Heaven. Not only the Just should assist, but it is highly useful, that even those who feel themselves burthened with grievous Sins, should make a frequent Practice thereof, besides the Days of Obligation; because, that although it be most certain, that this Sacrifice was not instituted to restore *sanctifying Grace* to him who has lost it by *mortal Sin*, as this belongs to the Sacrament of *Penance*, as it was decided in the Council of *Trent*; nevertheless, the Sinner assisting thereat, with some Degree of Compunction and Humility, and in this Disposition offering with the Priest, the immaculate Victim of our Redemption, may humbly hope for Aid and Inspirations to repent truly and entirely, and to dispose himself thereby to receive the Absolution of his Sins at the Tribunal of Penance, But the Just, indeed, have every Reason to hope for the greatest Benefits thereby, when they assist to render their acceptable Homage of Thanksgiving to the Most High, and supplicate for Favours. It is here to be remarked, that although the Holy Mass does not, indeed, cancel *mortal Sins*; yet, as it is a *propitiatory Sacrifice*,

crifice, it takes away, at least, our daily *venial* Offences, and even our *grievous*, forgotten by us, but yet detested by us, in an universal Abhorrence of all our Sins and Offences, with Sentiments of true and real Contrition. In like manner, we may obtain, in part, the Remission of the *temporal* Punishment due to our Sins, and to those of the Departed, to obtain the preservation from Sins in future, and other Aids of divine Grace, to overcome Temptations, to increase in Virtue, and every thing conducive to our spiritual Advancement. We are also entitled to hope for those *temporal* Favours in our Necessities, which God knows to be *useful* to us, when we ask them, not through a strong and blind Predilection for the meer Things of this World, but with a pure Intention of forwarding our *spiritual* Good thereby, and His greater Honour and Glory.

We are now to remark the great Difference there is between those who barely assist at the Holy Mass, and those who, moreover, participate of the Table of our Lord, by sacramental Communion. There is no doubt, but the former are in the way of acquiring much spiritual Advantage by so excellent a Devotion, provided that they assist with due Dispositions. They would do extremely well to add thereto, a strong devout Desire of receiving the Application of some Fruit and Benefit both from the *Sacrament* and *Sacrifice*, and
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this is called, *A spiritual Communion*, and there is no doubt, but it may much contribute to our spiritual Advantage; But the actual *sacramental Communion* is, most certainly, an incomparably greater and more precious Treasure, in which the Christian effectually partakes of the holy Table of the Lord. This actual Communion, as it is essential to the Sacrifice, on the part of the officiating Priest, so it completely opens the Way to all those Graces and Favours which the Assistants, in this case, may humbly promise themselves to obtain, at so very favourable a Time, from their loving Lord and Master, who thus condescends to come and dwell in Person under the Roof of his Servants. This heavenly Food, being the Source of all Good to those who are properly disposed to receive it, will, most assuredly, nourish their Souls in all Virtues, and effectually strengthen them in the hard and rugged Ways of human Life, to be finally conducted with Safety to that celestial Country to which they aspire with Ardour, and tend with Resolution.

The unbloody Sacrifice of the Holy Mass contains three principal Parts, the *Oblation*, the *Consecration*, and the *Communion*. In the first, the Bread and Wine are offered to God, and it is therefore called, the Offertory. But another Oblation, incomparably more important, is made tacitly in the Consecration itself, and expressly after the Action; because,

cause, that then, the Son of God Himself is offered up to the eternal Father, under these unbloody Veils, for the Salvation of Mankind. It is here to be remarked, that this Offering is also made by all those who assist thereat, by way of Affection and Desire, not, indeed, in their own Name, but in that of Christ. We must therefore take Notice, that, although the Priest alone sacrifices, in a certain manner, in the Name of Christ, of the Church, and of the People, nevertheless, they who assist thereat, enter into a Part of this Sacrifice, and offer it up together with the officiating Minister. The People too make tacitly the Oblation, with the Affections of their Hearts, accompany the Prayers which attend it, and the Priest presents them to God, not only for himself, and in his own Name, but also, as it were, as the Ambassador of the People assisting, as likewise, after the Communion of the Priest, every one, who is properly disposed, is intitled to the Participation of the Sacrament. The Consecration is the only Part which belongs solely to the Priest, as he alone has the Authority to consecrate, with the divine Efficacy of the Words of Jesus Christ, the Bread and Wine, so that they become the true Body and Blood of our Lord. It is, however, certain, that the Assistants at the Holy Mass are united with the Minister, and thus offer up the Sacrifice together with him; and this is clear from the very Words of the
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Mass : In the *Orate Fratres* : The Priest says, " *Pray, Brethren, that my Sacrifice and Yours* " *may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.*" For which Reason, *S. Peter Damian* thus writes : *This Sacrifice, (i. e. of the Mass,) is offered by All the Faithful, not only Male but Female, although it may appear that the Priest alone offers.** And after having cited some Words of the *Canon* of the Mass, he subjoins, that it plainly appears from thence, that the Sacrifice, placed by the Priest on the Altar, is generally offered to God by all the Faithful actually assisting. Let us add the Testimony of *Pope Innocent III.* treating of the Mass in the following Words : *The Priests do not alone make the Oblation, but also all the Faithful; for what is done by the Priests in particular, as Ministers, is also universally done with the Approbation of the Faithful.†* Lastly, *Guerrius, the Abbot*, repeats the same Opinion and Judgment, where he says : *The Priest alone does not sacrifice, but the entire Union of all the Faithful, assisting at the Mass, sacrifice along with him.†*

Perhaps the greater Part of the People have not learned, or sufficiently attended to this important Truth, which is of the utmost Consequence, for those who assist at the Holy Mass, because the Rite of the Church has necessarily

* In the Work entitled, "*Dominus Vobiscum*, C. 8."

§ On the *Mysteries of the Mass*, B. 3d.

† Sermon on the *Purification*.

cessarily suffered some Change in the Course of Ages. The Sacrifice was, in the most ancient Times, celebrated in the Latin Language, then almost generally understood, by People of all Descriptions, within the Roman Empire, in the West ; as also, in the Greek, which was then spoken in all the Roman Provinces of the East, and in Egypt ; the People thus at large answered the Priest in the Performance of his Function. The Latin Language insensibly corrupting from time to time, from whence, in a great measure, thus altered, sprung the modern Italian, French, and Spanish, grew, at length, in so much disuse, that the Learned alone, (and these were very few among the Laity in the middle Ages,) understood the genuine Latin. For which Reason, the assisting People ceased to answer the Minister of the Altar, and the Choir of Ecclesiasticks alone, in the Solemn Masses, performed the common Duty for All the Assistants, and a Clerk in private Masses. This Clerk now answers for, and in the Name of all the People. In like manner, in the primitive Ages, each, among the People, who was disposed to receive at the Mass, brought with them Bread and Wine to the Priest, and offered them up, together with him, to the Most High, in order that they might be consecrated by his Ministry. And though this precise manner of Offering has ceased, yet the *Substance* of the Rite has remained, because,
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even now, those among the People who intend to receive, should offer to God those Gifts, after the Gospel and the Creed, (if this latter be to be said,) and All the Assistants, without exception, after the Consecration, offer to the Almighty God our Heavenly Father, as a mysterious Victim, His only begotten and beloved Son, hidden and veiled under the Sacramental Species.

After what has been said it is easy to conceive, what a gross Error, and unthinking Mistake, it is to be present at the so momentous Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, without all due Reverence and profound Attention, under the false Idea, that the Priest alone is to look to the Performance of that most sacred Action with all the attentive Devotion it deserves, and that alone will answer the Intention, as if the whole Affair solely belonged to him. But in the true Idea of this Matter, that is, that All who assist thereat are, or, at least, surely ought to be united with him therein, which is incomparably the highest and greatest of all the sacred Functions, by which the Church of God can honour Him, render Him Thanks for Benefits received, and obtain them in future; it will certainly result, what a serious Preparation of the Mind should be made to hear Mass, and what an Abundance of devout Affections should spring up in the Heart and much more, for whoever has a Mind to complete the Sacrifice in the manner most
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profitable and useful to himself, by partaking of the Holy Communion at the Table of the Lord. The People, no doubt, do most reasonably wish to behold the Priest celebrating these most holy Mysteries, with all possible Reverence and Devotion, and certainly more than the Rest is he bound thereto: But let the People on their part never forget, that God also requires from them, as united with the Priest, in the manner we have already explained, great Reverence, Attention, and affectionate Devotion of the Heart and Mind, during this so awful and holy a Function. This they must possess, if they hope or wish for any spiritual Profit thereby, as God will not pour down his Graces and Favours on those who are cold, negligent, and inattentive, and who, perhaps, do not think on the Presence of that God, from whom All Good proceeds.

We are to consider the Eucharist, which is the principal, nay, the only essential Subject of the Holy Mass, in a twofold manner; that is, as a *Sacrifice*, and as a *Sacrament*. As to the former we have already seen, that in this respect, by the Order and Disposition of our divine Saviour, there is really renewed, but in a mystic and unbloody manner, the same Sacrifice which was made on the Altar of the Cross of the Son of God, become Man, and offered up as a Victim for the Remission of Sins, and the Salvation of Mankind. Here there

there is a *special* Application of Part of that infinite Merit, which Christ, by his Blood and his Death acquired, and more spiritual Benefits are to be hoped for than by any other Means. Moreover, we have seen that a Christian, if with a Conscience free from grievous Sins, and possessed of a lively Faith, he assists at the Holy Mass, is not to be considered simply as a Beholder, or Witness of this most sacred Action, but unites himself actually with the Priest in the Performance of it, after the manner that is proper and convenient for his Condition in the Church; that is, offering to God, in the first Place, the Bread and the Wine, and afterwards, in the Consecration, the immaculate Lamb, and partaking also, if he thinks proper, of this most holy Banquet. Behold then, how our good and gracious God has facilitated the Way to whoever believes in him, in the Name of his blessed Son, (let him be noble or plebeian, rich or poor, learned or ignorant,) to obtain all manner of Graces and Favours from the Throne of his Majesty. If the most High was so beneficent and liberal towards him, who, in the old Law, sacrificed meer Animals, how infinitely greater Efficacy must the Sacrifice of the Son of God Himself possess in the New, who is, at the same time, both the Priest and the Victim on the Altar, for our Love and the Good of our Souls? Then is the happy time therefore, in particular, to ask Favours and hope to obtain them,

to render the divine Majesty propitious to our Sins, to offer Thanksgivings to Him for past Favours, and solicit new Graces, nothing of which of ourselves, (poor Creatures that we are,) could we be able to perform in a due and proper Manner. But the Son of God performs all for us in the august Sacrifice of the Mass. Laudable is the Custom of those devout Christians who procure Masses to be celebrated ; that is, a particular and special Application of the Sacrifice for themselves, or their Relations and Friends, living or dead, and such a determinate Intention of the Minister is to be held as highly fruitful and profitable, in favour of the Person for whom it is offered, although it be unknown to us in what Measure God dispenses the Profit of this Application to the Living or Dead. Neither do we know the precise Measure of Value which God applies to the officiating Priest in the Mass, or to the assistant People, as this depends in part, on the greater or lesser Devotion and Dispositions of the one and the other. However, we may reasonably suppose, that the Mass avails much more to the Person who actually assists thereat, with due Reverence and Devotion, and so much the more, if he partake of the Holy Communion, than to him who is absent through Negligence or Indevotion, although the Mass should be principally celebrated for him : This is the Reason. A Christian who actually assists,

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does in Conjunction with the Priest, (as we have already seen,) pray, sacrifice and offer to God, and may, like him, partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord. Now, although the Consecration be the principal point of the Mass, and the most essential, yet, in the Oblation and Communion chiefly consists the *applicable* Merit and Value of the Mass, and these two Actions being performed by the actually assistant People, they must consequently partake more Benefit therefrom, than he who is absent, and has nothing to do with these holy Actions. We are also to be certain, that the Prayers and Oblation of those who assist are highly useful and profitable to the Dead; and therefore, he who truly loves the Memory of his departed Relations and Friends, will be careful to assist in *Person*, (if possible,) in order to unite himself with the Priest, and pray together with him, that God may render them also Partakers of the Benefit, Merit and Value of this ineffable Sacrifice.

If we consider the Eucharist as a *Sacrament*; that is, as only the Object of *Communion*, in which every Christian with proper Dispositions, and a Conscience free from mortal Sin, may partake of the immaculate Body of the Lord; There are Treatises without Number on the Nature and Excellence of this Action, which being, as we have said, a Commemoration, or a Renewal of the Lord's Supper, must, consequently, prove a Treasure of infinite

finite Graces, for whoever knows well how to turn it to due Profit and Advantage. For what Reason, indeed, did our loving Saviour invent, in so very miraculous and wonderful a manner, to come in Person, to remain with us, and to take up his Residence and Dwelling in us, if not to give us every good and perfect Gift, and to conduct us to Life everlasting? He has assured us of this in St. John; *He who eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, bath Life everlasting. My Flesh is truly Food, and my Blood is truly Drink. He who eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, remaineth in me, and I in him.** That Food, that *Living Bread*, which descended from Heaven, was given to us, in order to be the all-nourishing Aliment of our Souls. If we have not committed many Sins heretofore, if we refrain from them at present, we cannot too often acknowledge and repeat it, that it is owing to this Heavenly Food, which has strengthened us, and still continues to fortify us, during our earthly Pilgrimage. The Council of *Trent* proclaims the Act of Communion *an Antidote to preserve us from Sins*; and therefore the Frequency of it is highly laudable in those who aspire after solid Piety. Happy is he who well understands and thoroughly feels the transcendent Excellence of this heavenly Banquet, and of that so gracious Lord and Sovereign

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* Gospel of S. John, Chap. 6. Ver. 55. & seq.

vereign who invites us to it! Happy, indeed, to bring with him all that Fervour of Spirit, Attention of Mind, and devout Affections of the Heart, which are surely proper to receive so kind and loving a Guest and Lord! We should conclude from what has been said on this Topic, that Christian Piety may, indeed, find out many new Modes of Devotion to the Honour of God and our spiritual Advantage; but that we are, upon Comparison, to have ever in View, that by far the chief and principal of All is the Holy Mass, attended to with proper Dispositions, and crowned by the Act of Communion. Wherefore, the great Bulk of the People, not having Time or Opportunity to practise several Modes of Devotion, which others, not so occupied in the Cares of a Family, nor employed in daily Labour, can put in Use, have, nevertheless, no Reason to complain of their State and Condition, since God has rendered the GREAT AND CAPITAL DEVOTION of the HOLY MASS, so easy of Access to All, whether rich or poor, in which are included, the very Soul of Prayer, all that is most sublime and grateful in the Worship of the Creature to his Creator and Redeemer, and the most assured Foundation of Hope to obtain all Manner of Graces and Favours from Heaven. In a Word, This is THE DEVOTION OF DEVOTIONS for him who assists thereat as he ought, particularly, if he partakes therein of the Holy Communion. It

to be lamented, that the frequency and conveniency of this august Sacrifice, render us too often but little attentive, cool our Devotion, and weaken the due Liveliness of our Faith. We should then effectually rouse ourselves to an intimate Union with that so kind and loving Lord, who performs such stupendous Miracles in our Behalf, to gain and captivate our Love and Attachment, and to make us All His own.

From what has been already said it is easy to comprehend, that the People possess a certain Right to communicate at the Mass at which they assist, (such only indeed who are properly disposed,) if their Devotion leads them to it ; For this Right is founded on the Institution itself, of the unbloody Sacrifice of Christians, because the Priest *alone* does not perform all this grand Function : He does not say, *I offer*, but *We offer*, *Let us pray*, *We beseech Thee*, &c. and therefore does it in *Union* with the devout Assistants, who likewise pray and offer, together with him, so that regularly speaking, it is forbidden to the Priest to celebrate Mass quite *alone*, it being required that some of the People should assist. or, at least, the Clerk, who, in this case, represents the People, and answers the Priest in their Name. Consequently, the devout Assistants have a Right to Communion after that of the Priest, thus verifying also of them, what the *angelical* Doctor wrote in those Words : *Whoever*
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*offers the Sacrifice, ought likewise to partake thereof.** Nor can the Priest reasonably refuse to gratify the Devotion of the People in this respect. As to the Custom, so generally received, of dispensing the Eucharist *after* the Celebration of Mass, I cannot do better than adduce the Opinion of the Most Eminent Lord Cardinal *Querini*, Bishop of *Brescia*, in two Pastoral Letters, directed to the People of his Diocess, in the Year 1742, where he recommends that, as frequently as possible, (and where no Inconveniencies occur,) the People should receive the Communion *immediately* after that of the Priest, alledging to this purpose, what was expressed in the Council of *Trent*, in the following Words: *The Holy Council would, indeed, desire, that at every Mass, the Faithful, who assist, should not only communicate with internal spiritual Affection, but should actually receive the Eucharist, by the means of which, this most Holy Sacrifice would become so much the more fruitful and profitable to them. But as this does not always take place, this Council does not, therefore, condemn, as unlawful, those Masses in which the Priest alone receives Sacramentally; on the contrary, it approves and recommends them.†* So that the Council having expressed a Wish, that at every Mass not only the Priest, but the assist-

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* *S. Thomas of Aquine, Part 3d. Quest. 82. Art. 4.*

† *Coun. of Trent, Sess. 22. C. 6.*

ing Faithful, should communicate at it, seems as if it were to recommend it to them to receive *during* the Mass at which they attend. But this is more clearly evinced by the Words of the *Ritual*, cited by the abovesaid Cardinal ; that is ; *The Communion of the People ought to be made immediately after that of the Priest who celebrates, unless some reasonable Motive should defer it until after the Mass ; because the Prayers which the Priest recites in the Mass after the Communion, belong not to the Priest alone, but also respect those among the Assistants who communicate.** In the Acts of the Church of Milan, that is, in the Councils held by St. Charles Borromæus, we have the following Words: *Let the Parish-Priest be careful to preserve this Institute which is of the highest Antiquity ; that is, After he has, in the celebration of the Mass, taken the Blood of the Lord, he should dispense and administer within the Celebration, the Holy Eucharist to such of the Faithful who are disposed for it.†* In consequence of which Testimonies, the zealous Cardinal strongly recommends the Observance of this Rite, so that as far as it is possible, and where no Inconveniencies may stand in the way, the Sacramental Communion of the Faithful may immediately follow that of the Priest, *within* and not *after* the Celebration of the Holy Mass.

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* Rom. Ritual.

† Acts of the Synods of Milan.

We are here however carefully to remark, lest this particular Mode of Administration should be deemed by any as necessary and inviolable, and the contrary, as in itself blameable, and justly to be condemned; that this wise Regulation of the Church is not to be considered, indeed, as of indispensable Strictness, as there may often occur, reasonable Motives to defer the Communion of the People until after the Mass, and this being a Matter of *mere Discipline*, the Church has it in her Power to permit the other Mode, as Circumstances may offer in different Places, to render it more eligible. In the primitive Ages, (as Cardinal *Bona* has observed,) it is certain, that the popular Communion was performed *within* the Mass *only*, the Sick alone excepted, and in those Times whoever assisted at the Mass, received also the Holy Communion. But this holy Custom and Fervour began too soon to decline, and we have the Testimonies of St. *Ambrose*, and St. *John Chrysostom*, living even in the fourth Century of the Church, who complain, that there was frequently none of the People who, during the Celebration of the Mass, approached the Table of the Lord. The barbarous Ages succeeding, the Piety of the Faithful abated more and more, insomuch, that it became necessary to *oblige* the People to communicate, at least three times a Year, and at length, to the Easter-Communion only. I cannot

cannot decide, whether the Custom of communicating *after* the Mass was introduced in those Times. Some place the Commencement of it after the Year 1200. It is certain, that in the 16th, and the following Centuries, this Use and Custom became more generally diffused, and this for the greater Convenience of the Faithful. For as we see at present, that frequent Communion is increased with other Practices of Piety, Experience made it manifest, that if many were to receive *within* the Celebration of Mass, those who were not disposed thereto, and whose Affairs called them elsewhere, became impatient, lost the Fruits of their Devotion, and sometimes went away before the Conclusion of the Mass; from whence, it is probable, was derived, by degrees, the Custom of deferring the Communion of the People until *after* the Mass. As for those who have Children at home, many domestic Affairs to settle, and all those who, being in the Service of others, have but little Time of their own, and chiefly the Country People, who are, perhaps, very far off from the Place of Worship, have many Matters in their Line to look after, and who are obliged to leave room for others to hear the only Mass that remains, it is not reasonable to make People of such Descriptions wait for the Communion of many *within* the Mass, to their so great Inconvenience and Loss of Time. For these and other Reasons

which I omit, that most enlightened and zealous Pontiff, of glorious Memory, *Benedict XIV.* by his Brief to the Bishops of *Italy*, dated the 13th of November 1742, declared it worthy of Reprehension to refuse the Holy Communion to those who assist at Mass, and who desire to receive *therein* the Bread of Angels, remitting it, however, to the Prudence of the Bishops themselves, to prescribe whatever might be more suitable to the Convenience of the People, and to the circumstances of time and place, for the Distribution of the Eucharist. Wherefore, when there are but few to receive, they will do well to present themselves *immediately* after the Communion of the Priest. But when there are many, and particularly on Sundays and Holidays of Obligation, it may be more proper to defer it until the End of the Mass.

CHAPTER XV.

On Devotion to the Saints.

OF this species of *Devotion* we are now to treat, which is so general over the Christian World, and in which the People, (especially the illiterate,) should be well and solidly instructed, not to fall into Extremes. We all know that the Protestants reject this mode

mode of Devotion, nor admit of the veneration and invocation of Saints. It is said on the other hand, that the Russians, and other Christians of the East, are not, and certainly have not been exempt, at some times, from various Abuses on this head. The Catholic Church, speaking by the Mouths of her lawful Pastors and Instructors, takes a middle Road in her Faith, by which the practice of All should be uniformly and invariably directed. We must first of all then, learn her *Dogmas*, to have a right and proper Idea of this Subject. The truly good and faithful Servants of God, by the Means of their excellent Virtues, and a Life exactly squared, according to the Precepts and Counsels of the Gospel, full of Sanctity and Perfection, have arrived to the Enjoyment of that immense Reward promised by the Almighty God to His own true and faithful Servants in the other Life. They are now Blessed in Heaven, enjoy the Vision of God, assist about His Throne, and are His own chosen Friends and Favourites. Wherefore, like the Angels, they should be but reasonably supposed, worthy of some honour and veneration even on Earth. The World has its own Heroes, stained, not infrequently, with many Vices. The Saints are the Heroes of the Christian Religion, much more deserving our Respect and Veneration for the Splendour and Glory of their so many luminous Virtues; and St.

Augustine says, that he would call them precisely by that Appellation, if *Ecclesiastical* use and custom would warrant him therein. From hence was derived the Custom of celebrating, as a Festival, the Day of their Death, *precious in the Sight of the Lord*, or upon any other occasions to honour them for God. In which the Church, besides the Intention of magnifying God, *wonderful in his Saints*, and to reverence the Memory of those who converted *His Gifts* to so good Account, has also two other excellent Views and Designs for the spiritual Profit of the Faithful. The first founded upon the most ancient Tradition, and authenticated by the Holy Fathers, is to make us the better know, who can be the more useful to us in the Presence of God to obtain for us Favours, both Spiritual and Temporal, according to the Necessity we have of them. It is most certain that the good Servants of God have brought with them to Heaven, the ardent Charity they nourished on Earth towards our most adorable Creator, as also towards their Neighbour, beloved by them for the Love of God. This holy Fire certainly must blaze much more intensely in that blessed and happy State wherein they are at present. They remember us, they love us more than ever, and are eager to procure us every Good, by their Prayers and Intercession, well knowing that *Communion*, according to the Symbol, which
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passes between them and the Children of the Catholic *Militant* Church. So that when we invoke their Aid, they reading, as it were, our Prayers, in the clear Mirror of the Beatific Vision, present them to God accompanied with, and founded upon, the infinite Merits of our divine Mediator Jesus Christ, and can with ease obtain for us whatever may redound to the Good of our Souls. Wherefore, the Invocation of Saints is recommended to us by the Catholic Church, as an useful and laudable Means to obtain Favours from the Most-High, and we have Litanies on Purpose, wherein we intreat them to pray to God for us. The second View of the Church in celebrating the Feasts of the Saints, even more important than the former, is to place fully before our Eyes, those striking and lively Examples of all their Virtues, so that by viewing what they have done in the present Life, and considering the immense unspeakable Reward which they enjoy in the Kingdom of Heaven, we should ourselves become eager to imitate them, by separating ourselves from the Love of the perishable Goods of this World, to obtain those which are eternal and unchangeable in the Society of the Saints. The Holy Fathers inculcated this in particular in their Panegyrics; and for this reason, the Reading, with devout Attention, of the Lives of the Saints; written by wise and well-informed Authors,

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becomes a solid Aliment of Christian Piety, as it may, with the Assistance of Divine Grace, powerfully excite us to follow their Footsteps.

This is the Sum of what the Church proposes to our Belief, with respect to the Inhabitants of the Heavenly Jerusalem. But because the Ignorance and the irregular Devotion of some may carry them into Extremes, the same Church furnishes us also with the following Documents: No Saint whatever can be believed, or called God, without a great and horrid Impiety; our Faith acknowledges and confesses but ONE ONLY GOD, ONE in ESSENCE in a TRINITY of PERSONS. The Saints are no more than the *Servants* of God, and although their Dignity with respect to us be eminent, yet, when compared with the unspeakable Majesty of the MOST HIGH, they may be called, in this respect, a meer Nothing, the Distance being *infinite*, which must ever be between the Almighty Creator of All Things, and his Creatures, the Works of his Hands. Wherefore, the ancient Christians abhorred, and we ought also to abhor, the Term of *Divi** applied to the Saints. The pious Cardinal *Bellarmino*, in the Revision and Correction of his Works, ordered, that, wherever the Word *Divus* escaped from his Pen, in speaking of any Saint, it should be erased, and the Word *Sanctus* or *Beatus*† substituted

* *As approaching too nearly the incommunicable Majesty of God.* † *Holy or Blessed.*

stituted in its Place. It is common with us to say, the Church of such a holy Martyr, of a Confessor, or a Holy Virgin; but the Truth is, that these Churches and Altars are dedicated and consecrated to GOD ALONE, in Memory, indeed, and in Honour, (*for His Sake,*) of His holy Servants. We are also accustomed to say; *The Mass of such a Saint*, on the Day of his Festival, but it is, nevertheless, most certain, that the unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar is and can be offered but to God alone, with a *subordinate* Intention, indeed, of honouring the Memory of His Servants, but infinitely more, to bless, adore, and glorify Him, whose *own Gifts* we venerate in the holy Citizens of Heaven. For which Reason, St. Thomas of Aquine wrote, that *our Devotion towards the Saints does not terminate in them, but passes over to God, in as much as it is He, whom in reality, we venerate in his Servants.* And as St. Jerome says; *We honour the Relics of Martyrs, to adore Him, whose Martyrs they are; We honour the Servants on account of the Master.* It is likewise to be most carefully remarked, that the Pardon of our Sins is to be asked from God, is to be hoped from God, because that He *alone*, and not any Saint whatsoever, can remit our Sins, as we read in the Gospel; and every Body knows, that when we confess our Offences, at the Tribunal of Penance, we confess them to God, and from Him alone receive Absolution,

lution, by the Authority which He has been pleased to delegate to His Ministers. Besides, we are firmly to believe, that Miracles are not wrought *precisely* by the Saints, nor Favours *immediately* conferred by them, because their Authority and Power do not certainly extend so far. The Omnipotent and Gracious God is *Alone* the Author of them, either through our own Supplication, or that of the Saints; however, it may be allowed to say, that the Saints are, as it were, the *moral Causes* or *Instruments* thereof, by their Intercession. For as the Church teaches us, we pray to Saints, that they may pray to God for us, and if we thereby obtain the Favour we desire, it is the Will of God, that we acknowledge it principally from Himself, for it is He who actually grants it, and not they who implore Him to grant it; otherwise, he who should believe the Saints sufficiently powerful of *themselves* to work Miracles, and grant Favours, would believe them to be Gods, and such an Idea would obviously be most impious. Finally, if Relics and Images of Saints are sometimes made use of in blessing the People, it is not they, surely, that bless, but God *alone*, as we have it in the Roman Ritual.

Having established these *Dogmas*, let us now examine with Attention, our Devotion towards the Saints. In the first place, when it is well regulated according to the Inten-

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tion of the Church, it is certainly an excercise and practice of true Piety. Secondly, this may become superficial, and have but some Appearance, not the Substance of genuine Piety. Thirdly, it may happen through Ignorance to fall into Abuses and Excesses, for which it is tacitly or openly reprobated by the Doctrine of the Church. As to the first, It is then our Devotion is proved to be good and substantial, when it turns us from Sin, or advances us in Virtue. If the reading of the Lives of Saints, if the hearing from the Pulpit their holy Actions and Virtues, moves our Affections to honour them, and at the same time excites us to the Esteem and Love of Virtue itself; if holding them up as a Mirror to ourselves, we are forcibly impelled to abjure our Course of Life, as being but too different from that of the Saints, that we may hereafter walk in the straight and secure Path, by them elected, which infallibly leads to Paradise, and not any longer in the broad and dangerous Road of the World, which conducts to Perdition; then, indeed, we have reason to rejoice in such a Devotion, so highly salutary for our Souls. If we invoke the Aid of the Saints, that they may obtain from God the Gift of true Repentance for our past Offences, Strength to overcome Temptations, a Conquest over a vicious Habit, the Acquisition of a Virtue we stand in Need of, and all Matters of a like Nature;

Nature ; then, indeed, our Devotion will be solid and well employed. If the Festivals of the Saints awaken in us a pious Ardour to approach the Sacraments, with every due and proper Disposition, and increase in our Hearts the Love of God and our Neighbour, together with a greater Abhorrence of Sin and Vice, the Veneration we shall shew to the good Servants of the Lord, will then be highly fruitful and profitable to our Souls. As to the second Consideration, (would it were not so !) many are devout to the Saints, because they hope for *temporal* Benefits only, by their Intercession, such as, to be delivered from Sickneſs or Accidents, from Tempeſts, Inundations, or the Danger of Fire, to have a good Harveſt, to carry a Law-ſuit, to obtain Children, to make a prosperous Voyage or Journey, and the like. Is it, however, an evil Action in *itſelf*, to have Recourſe to the Saints for a Favour of this Nature ? No, certainly, provided we aſk not for any thing prejudicial to our Souls, or hurtful to our Neighbour. God is not at all offended, that we implore his Goodneſs and Bounty, even for *temporal* Favours. His Bleſſed Son, and our Divine Maſter, has taught us Himſelf to aſk of Him our daily Bread, and the Church, in the Litany of Saints, begs of God to grant and preſerve for us the Fruits of the Earth, as alſo to keep us from various *temporal* Evils. It is therefore, not only lawful,

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but laudable to ask for temporal Blessings, with the Intention of their being subservient to the *spiritual*, such as to ask for public and private Peace, because that War and Discord bring but too many Sins in their Train; as likewise, for Aid in any public Calamities and family Distresses, because that excessive Poverty may excite to the Commission of many Sins, and in like manner, in any other Cases of Necessity and Affliction. It is requisite besides, that we ask such Graces and Favours with humble Resignation to the Will of God, who knows more of the Affair than we do, and much better, whether what we ask be or not be truly useful to us, and for the real Good of our Souls. Without this Reflection and this manner of Thinking, if we are devout to the Saints only, and simply, through the hope of mere temporal Favours, without any respect to the Good of our Souls, our Devotion will be found to be superficial and worldly. It will be but a vile Traffic of our Self-Love which attends only to earthly Things, when, on the contrary, true Devotion has always for its End our *spiritual* Profit and Advancement. It would be much worse, if we requested the Intercession of the Saints for Favours which wear the Appearance of any Impropriety, Injustice or Vanity, as the Heathens addressed themselves to their false Gods, and for which

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reason, *Juvenal* himself, although a Pagan, covered them with Derision.

In the third Place, many Excesses and Abuses may be introduced into the Devotion we have for the Saints, a great number of which might be adduced, as having taken their Origin from ill-founded Opinions of the ignorant People in the barbarous Times. I shall just give a slight Idea of them, not to plunge too far into this Ocean of Mistakes, Prejudices and Errors. If you once asked of the common People, who, among the Saints, had the particular Care and Protection of Flocks and Herds, of Defence against Fire, they would immediately name St. Anthony, the Abbot. Now this sort of Opinion had no other Foundation, but the shallow Imagination of the more Ignorant of the common People, who thus wisely interpreted the manner in which the Picture of this Saint is usually drawn. He holds a kind of Fire in his Hand; he is then deputed to preside over Fire; at his Feet there is a Pig, that is enough to prove, that to him is committed the Care of Animals of all Sorts; But if they enquired of the Intelligent, they would have learned, that this great Saint is painted with a Flame, to indicate the ardent Fire of his Charity for God and his Neighbour; that the Pig is placed at his Feet, to denote his Conquest over Temptations to carnal Pleasures, and that

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the little Bell, which some Painters have given, hanging on the Top of a Stick to support himself, alludes to his Vigilance and Assiduity in Prayer. But all this signified nothing ; the People thus took it into their Heads, the Matter was carried so far, that although the Feast of this Saint was not of Precept or Obligation, yet they made it such themselves, without any Authority from the Church, and there are some Places where it is still maintained, and none of the Country People, nay, none of the Inhabitants of Cities or Towns, would dare to work on that Day. They would imagine themselves undone otherwise : In that Year their Cattle would perish ; their House would be in danger of being burned ; as if, indeed, the Saints were revengeful, and exacted, that they who are obliged to labour to earn their daily Bread, should desist from it without any spiritual Profit whatever, and without the Merit of Obedience to the Church of God. The People, in former Ages, thought proper to assign some other *particular Employments* to other Saints, according to the Bent of Fancy or Imagination. The Name alone of *St. Lucy*,* was sufficient for the ignorant People to depute her for the Preservation of the *Light* of the Eyes, although none of the antient Authors of Credit has written, that this holy Martyr was deprived of her Eyes. In like

* From Lux, lucis, *Light*.

like manner, various other Offices have been assigned to St. Agatha, St. Apollonia, St. Dominus, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Roch, and others. This particular Deputation of any Saint over any particular Necessity, or to ward off an Evil of a certain Description, (although not *absolutely* reprehensible,) yet had had its Origin, without a proper and lawful Foundation, in the sole Imagination of the People themselves, who believed they could religiously attribute a certain determinate Power, and Province to exercise it, to the Saints; but too like the Heathens, in their Idea of their false Gods. The Truth is, that *every* Saint in Paradise may be invoked in *every* Case whatsoever, and there is none of them who prays to God in our Behalf, but may be useful to us; and it would be an Error to believe or suppose the contrary, as *Navarrus* has observed. But at present, indeed, the People, because they are more enlightened, do not give way to those Notions, and if in practice they have Recourse to the Intercession and Prayers of some particular Saint more strongly and frequently than to others; this kind of Preference does not hinder them from knowing and acknowledging the Power of Intercession, on every Occasion, of the other blessed Inhabitants of Heaven.

There are some, perhaps, to be found, who make the *chief* Employment and Duty

of a Christian to consist in a certain Manner, in Devotion to the Saints, and seem to think, that *all* Religion is therein comprized, with little or no Attention to the important Duty of Imitation, of which we have already spoken. Under the Protection of such a particular Saint they look for every *temporal* Blessing. It is certainly laudable to elect a particular Patron among the Saints, to whose Intercession we not only recommend ourselves strongly, but also ardently endeavour to copy after his Virtues, and render ourselves similar as possible to the illustrious Original we propose to ourselves. For after all, we should never forget, we should ever keep it ever present in our Minds, that if our Devotion to the Saints does not conduce to that *ever* solid, substantial and *fundamental* Devotion, of which we at first have treated; that is, that *Grand Devotion* which makes us love God, and serve Him in Sanctity and Righteousness, as likewise to love our Neighbour really and truly on His Account, it certainly becomes but *superficial*. It will become *superstitious* also, if a Person should imagine, that under the Protection of such a Saint, for Instance, he had every Felicity to hope for, both in this and in the other Life, even though he were quite deficient in that *essential* Devotion and Piety which forms the true Christian, and which was practised by the Saints in so excellent a Manner. Famous and common was once the Devotion to St. Christopher, because it happened

happened to go abroad, that whoever beheld his Image would not that Day die an evil Death ; that is, sudden and unprovided : Hence this Distich :

*Christophori Sancti speciem quicumque tuetur,
Ista namque die non morte mala morietur.*

*If to your Eyes St. Christopher appear,
An evil Death that Day you need not fear.*

As also in this Verse :

Christophorum viders, postea tutus eas.

St. Christopher behold, be safe and bold.

Wherefore, to please the People, the Painter often represented St. Christopher on the Front of the Church in a *gigantic* Form, in Conformity to the popular Fables related of that Saint. This superstition is fallen entirely to the Ground, but would it God that no other superstitious Mode of Devotion remained. Ah ! if we could converse with the blessed in Paradise, and ask of them what they most desire of all Things ; they would all answer with one united Voice, that it is, most certainly, that our common Lord and Father, the Almighty God, should be loved and glorified, that without pleasing Him, it is absurd and impossible to think, with the least spark of true Religion, Reason, or common Sense, of pleasing His good Servants, that
Torches

Torches and Candles blazing on the Altars will have but an empty shew of Devotion, if no celestial Flame of the Love of God do blaze internally in the Heart. As they are full of Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, they stand not at all in Need of any of our earthly Poms, when exhibited meerly to gratify the Eye, and through a frivolous Vanity ; as they can then only please them, when by these Means we feel a strong Impulse, (to which we are obedient,) to effect a Reformation of our Lives and Morals, and square them, in future, by the unerring Line of the Gospel. But if we cannot consult the Saints in Person, we may surely consult their Books, and seek Instruction from good and holy Persons on Earth, who are never wanting to the Church of God, and so many pious and learn'd Directors. These will, indeed, praise and recommend Devotion to the Saints, and exhort us to the Invocation of them, but in the first place, and above all things, will set before our Eyes the absolute Necessity of solid and substantial Devotion which alone can lead to Heaven, and without which we cannot reach the desired Harbour. *St. Francis de Sales*, in a few words, counsels us to be devout to the Saints,* and chiefly to the blessed Virgin ; but employs all the rest of his Book in expounding the Essence of the most important and indispensable Devotion, and pointing out the means to acquire it.

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• *Introduction to a Devout Life.*

It were very much to be wished, that all Panegyrics on the Saints were measured with much Prudence and Caution, to avoid all Extremes, by seeming to attribute to the Servants of God, that which belongs to Him alone, by not bringing into Comparison one Saint with another, to erect thereon an imaginary Superiority, whereof we can have no certain or solid Idea in favour of the Saint in question. Such extravagant and ill-founded Eulogiums should be carefully avoided; because that, although the Intention may not be bad in the main, and due Allowance be charitably made for the fire of oratorical Declamation, still the Expressions themselves may be highly exceptionable, approaching to Impiety, offensive to the Intelligent, and seductive to the Ignorant. Whoever loves the Decorum and the true sound Doctrine of the Catholic Church, must ever be abhorrent to such Matters, which deform so improperly, and wound so sensibly, (although, indeed, without any Intention,) both the one and the other. We are indeed to love, to venerate and praise the Saints, but never, surely, with turgid, extravagant Hyperboles, and a mean excessive Adulation. They were surely full of Humility, nor did they leave this Virtue at the Gate of Paradise, and can we with any consistency represent them, as it were, the Arbiters of Heaven and Earth, the Dispensers of good Fortune, if not, sometimes, even of unlucky

unlucky Accidents, and as if they were possessed of Authority in *themselves*, nearly Omnipotent and Divine. It is not just, indeed, or rational, to doubt of real and true Miracles, (if proved as such,) wrought by the *means* of the Saints; the proper Proof of which is in a regular Process, and a deliberate Acknowledgment of them, in this Light, by the Higher Pastors of the Church. If any should spread Abroad such as are invented and false, the Author of them should render themselves liable to be called to a strict and rigorous Account for it to God.* Yet sometimes we hear of astonishing Prodigies, which are said to have been performed by some Saint, during his Life, when neither contemporary Writers, or those who came shortly after, have made the least mention of them. Notwithstanding

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* Muratori relates that, in his own Time, a Saint obtained great Credit with the People, because it was said and imagined, That he made some Noise at Night if he was inclined, that the Favour asked were to be obtained; and such an unmeaning Prodigy was even made the Subject of a pious Poem, and committed to the Press. In like manner, a great Miracle appeared in Print as having happened in Lima, a Country far distant from us, of two Children who died at the Age of two or three Years, and after Sixteen Years raised from the Dead by a Saint, and even having grown in the Tomb to the Stature proper for their Age. The Year was not assigned, the Names of the Parents were not given, or any Attestation of the Archbishop of that See, which alone was sufficient to indicate the Falsehood of this Account. Yet was it permitted to obtrude itself on the public Eye.

all the Prohibitions of Popes and Councils, all the Complaints of wise and solid Theologians, and the careful Precautions of the Church, to prevent the spreading of false Miracles, still they, in some manner or other, find their way into the World, and by this means would make us return to all the wild and irregular Licentiousness of the barbarous Ages, so much detested by him who holds the first place in the Church. True Miracles, as I have said, are not wanting, but rather abound; these are sufficient to do honour to the Saints, or rather to the Almighty God, *wonderful in his Saints*. Those Panegyrics are to be preferred, wherein the whole is not made up of Miracles, but rather an accurate and useful Description of the eminent Virtues of the Saint in question, so that the Hearers may be excited and inflamed to regulate thereby their future Life and Conduct. The pompous Display of Miracles alone, will very little advance the spiritual Profit of the People; an empty Admiration will be in general the fruitless and barren Result. It is certain, that the exemplary and heroic Practice of the Christian Virtues, is the chief and principal Cause which moves the Church to canonize the Saints, because, that by *these* they pleased God, and deserved to be admitted as *Co-Heirs* with Christ. Miracles are but of a secondary Nature, wherefore the former should, in all Reason, constitute the chief and leading Part of their Panegyrics. Finally,

Finally, we are to remark, that Devotion to the Saints, however good, is yet not to be considered as *absolutely necessary and essential* to a Christian; and if an Author of our Times has pretended to assert, that there is a general *Precept* to All to invoke them, he has added one to the Divine Commandments and Precepts of the Church, unknown to all former Ages. It is certain, that this *Obligation* and *Necessity* are not imposed by the Documents of the Catholic Church, which, in the Council of *Trent*, has only acknowledged, that this Invocation is *useful* and *laudable*, which sufficiently explains the Sentiments and Intention of the Council, afterwards so often set forth and discussed by so many Divines of the Roman-Catholic Communion. Nevertheless, whoever is obliged to the Recital of the Canonical Hours, or the Breviary, or celebrates the Holy Mass, is likewise bound to the actual Invocation of the Saints, because the Church has so prescribed it, in those Prayers, inserted in both. Likewise, he who should *never* invoke the blessed Virgin and the Saints, would render himself suspected of believing their Invocation and Intercession as unlawful or useless. I will not venture to disapprove of the Custom of some pious People, of dedicating some particular Day in every Week to the honour of some Saint or other. But if they applied themselves *more* fervently to devotional Exercises on that Day than on the Lord's Day,

instituted by God Himself, and for His Honour, their pious Affection, in my Opinion, would not be quite regular, and in a due subordinate Propriety. Although it be certain, that in honouring the Saints we give Glory to God, *wonderful in them*, still I think we should, by all our Demeanour give to understand, that we look upon the Lord's Day as the *first* of Festivals.

For six Days in the Week we apply ourselves to our temporal Interests, and respective Modes of Profession, Business, Trade and Occupation. The Law of Nature itself exacts, that there should be a certain determinate Time, wherein Man, persuaded that there is a God, his Creator and Redeemer, and a future State of Existence, should render the just Tribute of all due Worship to the great Lord and Master of All, and should more deeply think on the very first and most capital Point of his truly essential Interest, which is that of his immortal Soul, destined for an eternal and unchangeable State hereafter. Wherefore God Himself commanded, that every seventh Day of each recurring Week, should be a Day of Rest, called therefore the Sabbath. The Holy Church has assigned Sunday for this purpose, with the Addition of other Feasts, whether moveable or immoveable, throughout the Year. The Intention of God, and of the Church, in the Institution thereof, is sufficiently clear; would

to God it were as faithfully accomplished ! On those Occasions all Thoughts and Ideas of earthly Things should cease as much as possible, or any matters relative to Trade or Business, in order to present ourselves with whole Hearts and undivided Sentiments before the Throne of the Almighty, especially in His Temple, to acknowledge His Sovereignty over us, to adore his infinite Majesty, to render Him just Thanksgivings for so many Benefits conferred upon us, and implore His paternal Goodness for future Favours. The Church, in the *Letter* of her Precept, does not, indeed, impose any other Obligation on us but to hear Mass and to refrain from servile Works. But are we then to content ourselves with this alone, if we have a true and sincere Desire of the Good of our Souls ? Then is the Time to approach the Sacraments with Fervour, to hear the Word of God with all due Recollection and Attention, to accompany, with all the Ardour of our Hearts, the pious Functions of the Church, and to bring home with us an Understanding enlightened by the Divine Word, and an Heart inflamed with the Love of God. Thus, indeed, will the Festival-Day be well employed. But, surely, on such Days, it must ever be most absurd and irreligious to spend our Time almost entirely in meer worldly Diversions, at Balls, Plays, Gaming, Drinking, Revelling, and such like too dissipated, or even vicious,

Amusements. He certainly takes but little Care of his Soul who, in the short Time allotted him, does not turn the few Festivals that now occur throughout the Year, to the spiritual Profit thereof, and none at all, if he makes them subservient to his Passions, to displease and offend the Almighty God.



CHAPTER XVI.

On Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

THE most Holy Virgin, Mother of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, not only enters among the Number of the Saints, but is also, with Reason, called the *Queen of the Saints*; since that, besides, having excelled them all in the high Eminence of her Virtues, so sublime a Prerogative belongs to her, that the Splendour of every other Citizen of Heaven, disappears in the Comparison. Her Election to be the Mother of the only begotten Son of God, is a Quality so high, so august, that we cannot reasonably and in Conformity, indeed, with our natural Feelings on this sublime Idea, do less than conceive for Her, the highest Respect and Veneration to which a *Creature* can be entitled, who is so highly exalted by the Almighty Himself: Hence a greater

greater Degree of Honour to that of the other Saints is due to her; and as to what regards the Invocation of *Mary* in our Necessities, we have the common Opinion of the Church, that we shall have Recourse to her more profitably to obtain Favours and Benefits from God, than to the other Saints; to Her who was declared by the Angel *full of Grace*; to Her so *blessed through all Generations*; and for whom *He who is powerful hath done so great Things*. As she was so highly favoured with supernatural Gifts in this Life, raised in the Church to so eminent a Pitch of Honour, being full full of that Goodness and Charity, the God of which she brought forth, united with our human Nature, it is no wonder that we should look up for her holy Intercession and Prayers in our Behalf, as singularly strong and powerful. Wherefore, those among the Faithful who are desirous of every Aid to effect their Salvation, will profess a particular Devotion to *Mary*, venerate her highly, and earnestly request her Intercession before the Throne of the Most-High. Besides this, to forward ourselves in the Way of the Lord, She will ever be a clear Mirror for Imitation of every Virtue; so great and signal was her Humility, her Purity, her Patience, her Charity for all, and her ardent Love of God, not to speak of her many other excellent Qualities and Prerogatives. On this Mirror, in particular, Virgins consecrated to God are

to fix their Eyes, wherein they will behold the most perfect Model of all that their Divine Spouse desires and exacts from them. All who truly and attentively consider the most holy Life of the Virgin-Mother of God, may profit thereby, and will endeavour so to do, if they profess a *true* and *solid* Devotion to her. For the chief and principal Part of this, consists in the *Imitation* of her eminent Virtues, according to our respective States and Conditions. How can we think of pleasing her, if our Hearts be at Variance with God, if we repose in the midst of our Sins, if we never seriously think of Amendment, and of quitting the Road to Perdition?

These Documents are scattered abroad in innumerable Books, which all exalt the Excellence of the great Mother of God, and set forth her Praises, while at the same time, they excite us to Devotion to her. The Catholic World does not stand in Need of any further Illustrations of mine, on a Subject so much illustrated by so many others. But if some would require an useful Instruction, on the other hand, to prevent themselves from falling into Abuses and Excesses in this mode of Devotion, through Ignorance of the real and pure Documents of the Roman - Catholic Church, it will be highly proper to say something on the Subject, considered in *this* Point of View. Those who are averse to our Communion insult us, because, that finding in
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some Books certain Propositions too bold and overstrained in this Matter, relative to the Blessed Virgin, and the mode of Devotion to her, they either believe themselves, or would make others believe, that such is in Reality, the *Doctrine* of the Catholic World. The *Dogmas*, however, of the Holy Church are, in all Reason, *only* to be taken from Councils, Declarations of the Sovereign Pontiffs, from properly authorized Catechisms, and not, surely, from some private Writers, who, treating, with too little Caution, of devotional Matters, have fallen into those Abuses and Extravagancies, which are reprov'd by the Church herself. I know it is the Opinion of some, that it were better not to touch upon these Matters, lest that, by laying open the Excesses of Devotion, it should in itself grow cold, and almost become extinct, without reflecting, however, that if it be highly laudable to promote Devotion to the Mother of God and the Saints, it is very important, nay necessary, not to permit Weeds to shoot up amidst the good Grain. These zealous Persons do not advert, that to leave a wide open Field to imprudent and indiscreet modes of Devotion, turns into Discredit to the Church, and whenever it should appear, that the Honour of the Virgin would prejudice that of God, or of our Divine Mediator, or would become hurtful to the devout Persons themselves, by the Intermixture of some Supersti-

tion or other, how can a true Christian oppose the Cure of such dangerous Wounds, taking so little Care of the Honour of God Himself, of His Church, and the Welfare of such mistaken devout Persons themselves? This, surely, cannot be called a Zeal according to Knowledge. Wherefore, the Wise will approve of the Exposition of some of those Excesses, so that if any there be so little instructed in those Points, as to fall therein, (which is hardly credible,) they may learn to honour and invoke the Mother of God after a Manner that is pleasing to herself, it being most certain that *Mary* herself, more than any one existing, disapproves and condemns that Devotion and Honour which are not proper and suitable to her.

I again repeat, that Devotion to *Mary* is useful and laudable in a greater Degree than to any of the other Saints, and that he is to be praised who promotes and extends it, who embraces and accomplishes it. But it is always necessary to remember, that no Idea of the Divinity is to be annexed to *Mary*, according to the Advice of *Epiphanius*, and after him *Theodoretus*. We should venerate her as a kind of Advocate in our Behalf, but carefully shun the Idea of expecting Pardon of our Sins, or Salvation from her. We should also reject the strange Notion of her *commanding* in Heaven. Such like Expressions are not certainly to be taken to the Letter,
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by any means, and if ever we meet with them, they must be understood with a good deal of cautious Interpretation ; they might fall from the devout Fervour of some good and holy Persons, who, undoubtedly, did not at all intend they should be literally taken, but barely to signify the great Weight of her *Intercession*, from the Peculiarity of her Merits and Station, but not the smallest Atom of, as it were, *coercive* Authority. True Catholic Theology acknowledges the Almighty God, and *Him alone*, for our supreme Lord and Master. Jesus Christ is also our Sovereign Lord, even considered as Man, by a Concession made Him by His Eternal Father. The Office of *Mary* is to pray, to intercede with Him for us, and not, indeed, to exercise Command and Authority. *Holy Mary pray for us* : Such is what the Church teaches us, and it is her we should hearken to, that we may know what is precisely *doctrinal*, and not the unmeasured fervorous Expressions of any private Author, even though ever so good and holy. In like manner, we may meet with some who imagine, that no Grace, no Gift of any kind, descends to us from God, but by the Hands of *Mary* ; which may, indeed, be very soundly and properly understood in this manner : By means of this immaculate Virgin, who conceived and brought forth Jesus Christ, the Gift of Gifts, to this World, we have, indeed, together with *Him*, all manner of
 Gifts,

Gifts, and every heavenly Blessing, through *His* infinite Merits. But to take it otherwise, it would be an Error to believe, that God and His Blessed Son, would not, or that they even could not, grant us Favours, without the Intercession of *Mary*. “*The Man Christ Jesus*, (says St. Paul,) *is the only Mediator between God and Man.**” Without the Interposition of this *Divine Mediator*, we are well assured, indeed, that we can obtain no Favour from God, and He is the *Only* one, according to the Attestation of St. Paul, because that He alone could reconcile us with God, and by *His own intrinsic* Merits, (entirely *independent* of those of any other Being whatsoever,) was, and is, able and sufficient to obtain for us any Graces or Favours from God. This, however, does not hinder, but that *Mary* may be called a Mediatrix, through a kind of Analogy, when praying for us, she procures from the Mercy of God the Relief of our Wants and Necessities; and in this Sense, that is, by a Mediation carefully to be distinguished from the *independent* and *divine* Mediation of Jesus Christ, we may also call all the other Saints by the Name of Mediators, but we must always keep the Idea in View, and never for a Moment lose Sight of it, that neither *Mary*, nor any, All of the Blessed Servants of God combined, can possibly obtain any Grace or Favour, but by the Means of

* 1st. Epist. to Timothy, Chap. 2. Ver 5.

of our *only Mediator*, (*properly and strictly* so called,) Jesus Christ, as the Holy Council of *Trent* teaches us; for which Reason, it would be a devout Exaggeration to pretend, that all Divine Favours pass to us through the Hands of *Mary*, and that we are to ascribe all to her Intercession. No one has ever imagined, and no Catholic, surely, believes, that when we request the Prayers of the Saints to succour us in our Necessities, that they must immediately have Recourse to the Intercession of *Mary*, in order that we may obtain from God, the Object of our Desire and Petition.

Jesus Christ is then the grand Foundation of all the Hopes of Christians, the true and proper Object of all their Confidence, whose *own* Merits move the Mercy of His Divine Father to grant to us, truly penitent, the Forgiveness of our Sins, to bear us up amidst all the Difficulties and Dangers of this mortal Life, and to open to us, in the End, the Gates of Paradise. It is, nevertheless, permitted to us, to call *Mary* also *our Hope*, that is, only with respect to the Efficacy of her *Prayers*, to her Son, in our Behalf, which we may reasonably believe to possess much weight and power, and the Greatness of her Charity to wish us every Aid we want. But if ever it should so happen, that any one should so enlarge and amplify this *Hope*, as to assert, or imagine, that whoever is Devout to her, *cannot* be damned, will not die a sudden Death,

Death, and that he will infallibly have time to reconcile himself with God; together, perhaps, with Expectations of all manner of temporal Favours: Let the Faithful know, that such Ideas, (generally speaking,) can have no Place in the just and pure doctrinal Instructions of the Roman-Catholic Church. Certainly, whoever has a true interior Devotion to the Mother of God, accompanied by a moral Conduct corresponding to such a Devotion, ought to hope much from the Intercession of one who is so grateful and acceptable to God. But so wide a Field of Expectations is not to be opened, as that there may be created a deceitful Hope, to make Sinners easy in their Iniquities, by a mere external Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the Good to relax in their Vigilance. Is not the Christian, (according to St. Paul,) to work out his Salvation *with fear and trembling*.^{*} We hold, besides, as a *Dogma* of Faith, that *final Perseverance* is a gratuitous Gift of God, and that, without a clear Revelation on His part, and who can hope for this? (nay, on the contrary, if any such were pretended, it should be suspected to proceed from the Fallacy of the Devil,) we can never be *absolutely certain* of making a good End. Wherefore, the abovementioned Hope, as being hurtful to Christians, contrary to the Documents of the Church, and superstitious in its Nature, is entirely

* To the Philippians, Chap. 2, Ver. 12.

tirely to be rejected. It is true, indeed, that some Miracles are pretended to have been wrought, which would seem to establish this great imaginary Privilege, annexed to those who are Devout to the Blessed Virgin. But Narratives of this kind, are not Documents of Faith; nor will a wise and prudent Christian trust the great and important affair of his eternal Salvation, to doubtful or fictitious Legends, but on the certain and infallible Truth of the Holy Scriptures, which contradict such Pretensions, and the Judgment of the Fathers and founder Theologians, who disapprove and reject them.

An indiscreet Devotion towards *Mary*, might also verge into Extremes, by cooling and weakening that Devotion of a superior Order, and *necessary in itself*, which we *indispensably* owe to our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ. There is a sufficient Number of Feasts, laudably instituted by the Church in Honour of the Holy Virgin; yet, some there are, perhaps, who would wish to see them multiplied, and without any Necessity, or Prospect of solid Edification of the Faithful. The holy Time of Advent has been proposed by the Church as a fit and convenient Season, for every one to prepare himself for the so salutary Event of the Birth of the Son of God, and that we might duly and seriously meditate on this unspeakable Mystery of the Love of God towards us wretched Sinners. There have been
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some Devotees who have turned these Days (of Advent) solely to honour *Mary*. We must speak in like manner of the Festival of the *Annunciation*. The chief and principal Mystery of that great Solemnity is, the Incarnation and Conception of the Word of God made Flesh; that is, of the great and capital Source and Fountain of All the spiritual Blessings of Mankind. Yet, how seldom do we find this so sublime Topic, *precisely* so considered, treated of for the Instruction and Consolation of the Faithful? The Holy Virgin is *alone* to be mentioned, and, indeed, whoever would do otherwise, would appear, to undiscerning Zealots, to have little or no Devotion to the Mother of God. She does, indeed, merit our Praises and Encomiums, still, however, our Divine Saviour and Redeemer, deserves incomparably more at our Hands. This being a Truth indisputable, at once decides the Question. We are certain of the infallible Promise of Jesus Christ Himself, who thus expressly says; *If ye shall ask me any Thing in my Name, that I will do.** He does not say in the Name of another, but in *my Name*. And shall we, indeed, be at a Loss for Confidence, shall we hesitate and falter in our Speech in addressing this, our own Blessed Lord? Shall we be afraid to supplicate Him *immediately*, and in his own Person? Let us hearken to the Apostle for Instruction:

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* *St. John, Chap. 14. Ver. 14.*

Seeing then that we have a Great High-Priest who hath passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Confession. For we have not a High-Priest who cannot have Compassion on our Infirmities, but One, tempted in all Things like as we are, yet without Sin. Let us go therefore with Confidence before the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace in seasonable Aid.* With all due Respect to the Holy Virgin, with every Acknowledgment of the powerful and salutary Aid of her so desirable Intercession in our Behalf, who is still to be believed to love his People better, Jesus Christ, to whom we expressly belong, by so dear bought a Title, or the Blessed Virgin or the Saints? This, surely, cannot be for an Instant a Matter of Doubt or Disputation. He who died for the Love of us, who feeds us every Day with his own most precious Body and Blood, who desires so much to do us every Good, and that we should look up to Him in all our Necessities, how is it possible that He should wish us to be diffident, distant and fearful? Such Love as His, surely, must naturally inspirit Courage, and embolden Resolution.

Whenever our Divine Master is exposed on the Altar, under the sacramental Veils, we should then in particular address ourselves immediately to Him, in those Prayers to the Son of God and our dear Redeemer, which
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* *St. Paul to the Hebrews, Chap. 4. Ver. 14.*

are not wanting in our common Prayer Books, when He appears with so much Love and Tenderneſs, to bleſs His devout People. This *particular* Devotion to Him is, ſurely, not only uſeful, but it advances higher, for it is *in itſelf neceſſary* for every Chriſtian. This Diſtinction of *Utility* and *Neceſſity* in Devotion, is of the utmoſt Importance, for it eſtabliſhes *Priority* and *Preference*, where it is indubitably to be claimed, and maintains throughout a *Regularity* of System. Some ignorant well-meaning People are to be admoniſhed to addreſs the Mother of God in a more cautious and guarded manner; that is, not in Terms uſually appropriated to the ſupreme Being alone; as for Example, *God Almighty and the Bleſſed Virgin have Mercy on me*; for although the Words *Have Mercy*, when applied to the Virgin, may bear a very innocent Senſe, as meaning only a *Wiſh* for her *Prayers* to God in our Behalf, ſtill there may not be wanting ſome who may interpret them, (in the Mouths of the Ignorant at leaſt) to ſignify a pretended impious Equality of *Mary* with the Moſt-High. They would ſay, perhaps, that among Catholics there is no Diſtinction, and that the *incommunicable* Majeſty and Attributes of God are horribly violated. Whereas, when *Mary* is conſidered with reſpect to Him, the great Lord of All, although the moſt exalted and happy among *Creatures*, yet, of *Herſelf*, ſhe has no Splendour,

dour, and whatever she possesses is, most certainly, by her own Acknowledgment, derived from the Source of all Splendour, God Himself. Wherefore, the People ought to be careful in their pious and devotional Exercises, that they keep within just Bounds; as it would be absurd and irrational on the one hand, not to honour one of such an august and transcendent Dignity as the Mother of God, and by not invoking her, to deprive ourselves of so great an Aid to Salvation, as her holy and powerful Intercession in our Behalf; so on the other hand, we should always abide by the Intention of the Church, and never pass those wise and necessary Limits prescribed by her; for otherwise, the holy Virgin herself will, most assuredly, condemn, not only any Excess, Extravagance or Abuse herein, but any one who should ever dare to introduce or propose it: *Our Respect*, (says Peter, the Abbot of Chelles,) *for our most blessed Lady, the Virgin Mary, should lead us to a just and proper Veneration of her, but not into all the Extremes of unbounded Adulation.**

. It is of the utmost Importance to our Faith, to take due Notice of any Abuses, Excesses, and Irregularities that might, perchance, silently intrude themselves in that Species of Devotion, which is proper for the Saints: Whoever has a true Zeal for the Purity thereof, will instantly apprize the People of any thing

* *Book 9th. Ep. 10th.*

thing that may be discordant from the holy Documents of the Church, and which, if suffered for a while, might be the Parent of *Superstition*, which is a most grievous Evil, utterly abhorred by the holy Religion we profess. The incomparable S. Charles Borromæus, Archbishop of Milan, who laboured so strenuously to put in Execution, and second the Intention of the Orders of the Council of *Trent*, to clear away the *Discipline* of the Church from the Rust of the barbarous Ages, thus writes in his fourth *Provincial Council*: *As much as we should labour in the Establishment and Increase of Religion, we should be as active and vigilant in eradicating Superstition from the Minds and Understanding of Men.** It appears from Ecclesiastical History, that ignorant and incautious Devotion, did sometimes introduce certain Opinions and Practices worthy of Censure; the learned Godeau, Bishop of *Vence*, tells us, in an Eulogium on the abovementioned S. Charles: *The Devotion to the Holy Virgin was always increasing after the condemnation of Nestorius, and the Ignorance of the common People arrived to such a pitch, in the succeeding Ages, that many Excesses were the Consequence, so that at length Superstition became so great, that it was sufficient to grieve every one who knew how far, and within what bounds, that Honour and Veneration should be limited, which*

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* *Acts of the Church of Milan, P. 119.*

is due to the Mother of Jesus Christ.* The famous Father Petavius also, has thus written to this Purpose, in one of his Theological Tracts: *I shall in this Place have no Difficulty to give some Advice to those, who are devout to the Holy Virgin; that is, that they should take Care not to be too much, and to any Degree of Extravagance, transported by their Piety and Devotion to her; and that being satisfied with the true and solid Encomiums, which do most undoubtedly belong to her, they should discard all those which are of a fictitious Nature, for which no Authority, or no proper Authority, can be shewn or advanced: Any thing of the least tendency to any Species of Idolatry, which, (as St. Augustine says,) is occult and innate in the Heart of Man, is exceedingly abhorred by Theology; that is, by the Gravity of heavenly Wisdom, the Property of which it is not to admit or teach, but that which is found to be exactly conformable to the sure and certain Rules of Truth.*§ The learned Father Theophilus Raynaud writes also to the same Purpose, in his Work called, *The Marian Dyptics*,† which for the sake of Brevity I shall omit. Such as the Judgment was of those celebrated Divines in these Matters; such has ever been, and continues to be, that of the Holy Roman-Catholic Church, and of all

* *History of the Church.*

§ *On the Incarnation, B. 14. C. 8.*

† *Seet. 3. Point 1.*

all those who understand the true Decorum and Propriety of Catholic Doctrine, who, in the same degree, and with as much ardour, as they praise and recommend a *true* and *lawful* Devotion towards the Saints, and especially the Queen of Saints, do as much disapprove, condemn and detest, every Excess and Extravagance of Opinion, and practical Veneration of them.

CHAPTER XVII.

On Devotion towards Relics, and the Pictures, or Images of Saints.

IT is a Document of the Catholic Church, that the Relics of Saints deserve a certain Reverence and Honour for two Reasons: in the first Place, having been the Receptacles of the Holy Ghost; and secondly, because that Faith teaches us, that those very Bodies shall, in the universal Resurrection, be exalted even to partake of the Glory of God. Sublime Prerogative, which rationally and naturally must claim our Respect. With respect to Images or Pictures for holy Purposes, as we cannot, with our corporal Eyes, behold those blessed Servants of God, who now enjoy all the Glory and Delights of His Paradise,

dise, we behold them in the Representations of them, and these Representations deserve a certain Respect from us, on account of *what they represent*. Let us here remark, that this Honour to Relics and Images is not a Matter of *Precept*, but in Ecclesiastical Functions, and on a certain determinate time and occasion, on which, not to honour them would give Scandal. But it is, indeed, always commanded, not to dishonour them, or despise them, because, a just Suspicion would then arise, that the Saints themselves whom they represent, are not entitled to Honour. The Illiterate and Ignorant should, by all means, learn to entertain right and just Ideas on this Head, and know *precisely* the Catholic Doctrine, what all the Intelligent have ever professed, and still oppose to all the Invectives and Railleries of People of other Communion.

It cannot be denied, and Experience makes it manifest, that the great Bulk of the Illiterate and Ignorant, have no right Conception of *speculative* Truths. Books in general are not made for them, and to rouse and excite them to Action, *material* Objects are proper and necessary to affect them by the Senses. Images, or Pictures of holy Persons, Things or Actions, were in use in the first Ages of the Church, called by St. Gregory the Great, the *Books of the Ignorant*, and were acknowledged to be of Use and Service therein.

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These Matters awaken the Devotion of the People, as likewise do the Sepulchres of the Saints, their Relics and other pious Things. And although the Intelligent and Well-informed do not so much stand in Need of *sensible* Objects to effect this Purpose, and raise their Thoughts to God; yet, it not unfrequently happens, that even to such, they are of some Utility; that their Devotion is recalled and further animated by external Objects, such as, for Instance, when they behold the august and holy Functions of the Church performed with all the Gravity, Dignity and Majesty which appertain to them, as also, with all the profound and solid Devotion which they indubitably claim; besides the Visitation of those Temples, where rest the assured and certain holy Relics of the Saints in Glory. Even those who are eminent for Genius, Learning, or Sanctity, when they present themselves in Prayer before the Image of Jesus, crucified for our Love, will certainly find some Idea of Calvary in their Minds, and their Hearts, impelled by this so dear and moving Object to pious and devout Thoughts and Affections.

It is highly necessary fully to comprehend the Doctrine, and maturely weigh the Intention of the Church in the Veneration of Relics, Pictures, or Images of the Saints, and other *material* and *sensible* Aids to Devotion and Piety. We must first of all establish, that

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that our Thoughts and Veneration are not at all, by any Means, to be fixed upon or applied to the *material Object in and for itself*, but our Minds should carefully be raised to God, and to those Saints themselves, whom their Pictures, or Images, represent to our Imagination. The Relics of the Saints, considered in *themselves*, are certainly but terrestrial Matter; Pictures, an aggregation of Colours; Images, hewn out of Wood, or cut out of Marble, and brought to a proper Shape. What is therein of *Matter* so considered, is certainly worthy of no sort at all of Respect or Veneration, and whoever would exhibit it to *Matter*, as such, would commit Idolatry. For this horribly undue and impious Worship, the Heathens are condemned in the Holy Scriptures, both in the Old and New Law, because they adored not only false Gods, but likewise their Images, the Works of the Hands of Men. So that when we kneel before the Sepulchres of the Saints, their Relics, or Representations of any Kind, we ought carefully to bear in Mind, that the Saint himself is not at all there, whom they serve to bring to our Remembrance. His Soul is in Heaven in the Possession of the Glory of God. There, therefore, are our Thoughts to ascend, our Prayers for Intercession, and not, indeed, fix themselves upon the mere *Matter* before our Eyes. Thus, when we venerate and kiss the holy Crois,

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or kneel in Prayer before it, knowing that our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ is not there, but in Heaven, at the right Hand of His Father, our Devotion is to mount up, even to Himself in Person, to adore him and recommend ourselves to him; so that such Images, although they deserve a religious Veneration, not, indeed, for themselves, but for *Him* whom they represent; yet are only to serve to excite us to supplicate more ardently, and lift up our Thoughts and Affections more effectually, even to Heaven itself, to find enthroned with the Eternal Father our ever Blessed Redeemer. There is a vast difference between the Image of Christ crucified and the Sacrament of the Altar. Every Catholic acknowledges that in the latter, Christ is really and truly present, for which reason our Adoration and Prayers are to terminate therein; but as the Image of the Crucifix is but a mere Representation of our Saviour, we ought not to address our Prayers to this Representation, but to the great Original in Heaven.

It is much to be wished, that as inculpable as the *real Doctrine* of the Roman-Catholic Church is, with respect to the *true Use* of Relics, Pictures, or Images of Saints, the Devotion of all the Faithful in this Respect, would keep pace with it, and be always within the just Bounds of devotional Regularity. The Abuses and Excesses on this Head in former Ages, of which *Fleury* makes mention

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in his Ecclesiastical History, were the Occasion that some precipitated themselves into the contrary Extreme, and endeavoured to extirpate utterly and entirely those, otherwise, laudable Objects, when brought back to their proper Use of Christian Piety and Devotion; whence they got the Name of *Iconoclasts*, or *Image-Breakers*. Even in our Days, the *Russians*, the *Abyssinians*, and other Christian People make, as it were, the principal Strength of their Religion to consist in the Use and Veneration of holy Pictures, placing in them their greatest Confidence, with other Excesses which are not necessary here to be related. In the superior Light and Illumination of the Catholic Religion, there should not be found any who should form his *principal* Devotion in the Veneration of Images, in harbouring any kind of wild Idea of any sort of Presence of the Saints in them, in entertaining the Hope of eternal Salvation from this Mode of Devotion alone, without reflecting, that when that solid, substantial, and ever necessary Devotion, which we have pointed out in the first Chapters of this Work is wanting, this other Mode of Devotion will be but superficial, and may even become superstitious. Among the Greek Christians a certain Image of our Blessed Lady, which was believed to have been painted by St. *Luke*, was in very great Veneration, for the foolish People imagined, that the Spirit of the Mother of God dwelt in it. *Inno-*

cent III^d. condemned, as superstitious, so strange an Idea.* We are here to advert, that, perhaps, even those who are deeply engaged in the Habits of Sin, and not at all disposed to break them, may sometimes flatter themselves that they are still good Christians, on account of some little merely external shew of Devotion in this and other respects, because these Matters press not upon their Passions, nor oblige them to the Labour and Difficulty of a Combat to suppress and triumph over them. But let us advert to the true and genuine Use both of Relics and Representations of the Saints of any kind. They ought to awaken in us the Remembrance of the Saints, and of their eminent Virtues for our Imitation, of their unspeakable Happiness and Glory in Heaven, to inspire us with a strong and ardent Desire of attaining thereto, of their perfect Charity, to animate us to implore their Prayers and Intercession to God in our Behalf. If such be not our Ideas, our Devotion, in this respect, will, indeed, be but of little Value. What the Saints themselves most ardently desire of us we have already seen; when this is wanting, our most zealous Devotion, in other Respects, is like those Fire-works which make so much noise, and so illuminate the Sky, but soon end in Smoke and Nothing.

It may here be proper to remark, that we should never give to understand that we have,

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at least in Appearance, a greater Respect and Veneration for the Representations of the Saints, than for our divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. On entering the House of God, we should first of all present ourselves to Him in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, and not immediately before some Picture, which may happen to catch our Attention. Who would respect the Servants to the, at least, seeming Neglect of the Master? *Nicholas de Cleminges* says; *Our Forefathers had as much Devotion towards the Saints as we, but then their Zeal was according to Knowledge, and they carefully inculcated, that the Saints are not to be honoured after such a manner, as to seem to be wanting, in the smallest Degree, in that high Respect and Honour which is due to God.** The Roman Ritual provides against these and similar Abuses, with other *Pontifical* Decrees to this Purpose. We have an excellent Instruction on this Head, from that zealous Pontiff, *Clement XI.* on the 20th of January 1705. *He orders, that during the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the Image, or Images, on the Altar, should be removed, or covered, and that on this Altar there should be laid no Relics or Images of Saints.* It is exceedingly proper, that the People at large should be well instructed and informed in these, and all other Matters of a similar Nature.

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* *In his Book against the Institution of new Festivals.*

It may be also, perhaps, expedient to remind some of the People, that there is, surely, but one Holy Virgin Mother of God, although there be so many various Denominations of her in so many different Churches and Confraternities. Our Lady of the Rosary, for instance, has no more Power, nor merits more Devotion, than our Lady of Mount-Carmel, nor more in one place than in another. She is glorified in Heaven, and disposed to grant her Intercession to whoever invokes her from his Heart, in any place whatsoever. It is only in our Ideas she can be considered as divided, nor can any place considered *in itself*, render her more favourable to us, but the good Disposition, indeed, of the Person who has Recourse to her, and which, indeed, may be more warmly excited in one particular Place than in another. For which Reason, there is a greater room to hope for Favours in the more celebrated Sanctuaries, when, not indeed, on account of them in *themselves*, but on account of our greater Faith and Ardency of Devotion, we sometimes receive a favourable Return to our Supplications.

To all the Contempt and Railleries of People of other Persuasions, with respect to this, and other similar Matters of *external* Worship or Devotion among Catholics, among the former of whom, the majority of our *Tour-Writers* are but too remarkable for hasty Judgment.

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Judgments, and uncharitable Deductions; it will be sufficient to answer, that the Church has taken all imaginable Pains to prevent Abuses of any kind, or procure them to be eradicated, when silently introduced. The Council of *Trent* gives particular and special Orders on this Head. In Conformity thereto, every vigilant and zealous Pastor will exert himself to the uttermost, that the most ignorant may learn the true Nature of real and solid Devotion, and the just Gradation of the different Objects proposed to awaken and inflame it, together, with the exact and precise Idea we should entertain of the Merits and Influence of each in Succession. Let us close this Chapter with the 41st Canon of the Synod of *Prague*, held in the Year 1549, and brought into the Collection of Councils; *We command that the Use of Images be retained in our Churches as serviceable to instruct the People, and to excite the Minds of all to Devotion; Provided that our Pastors accurately apprize the People, that Pictures or Images are not proposed or set before them to be adored; but to the End, that they may bring to our Remembrance, what we should adore and venerate, and those Matters which it will be useful to us to recall to our Minds.*—— In the 42d. Canon, the Fathers of the Council thus proceed: *As the useful and lawful Retention of Images, or Pictures, should, indeed, be confined within such Bounds, as that the Ignorant among the People*

People may never adore such Representations, or put any Confidence at all in them, but may learn, by their means, WHO it is whom they should adore, what Saints they should honour, and from WHOM, in the End, they should hope for all manner of Gifts and Blessings. We being desirous to preclude every Access to Superstition, do lay our Injunction on ALL Ordinaries, that if, perchance, they observe within their Districts, that a great Concourse of People assembles about some Image, and that they fix themselves, in any Measure, in the precise particular figure of this Image, or imagine it to possess somewhat Divine, in such a Case, taking counsel with Divines, and those who are well versed in Christian Antiquities, and full of Zeal and Piety, according to the Nature and Quality of the Cause in Question, let them either take away this Image entirely, or change it, leaving in its Place another remarkably different from it, to the end, that the Ignorant, who have need of material Objects to raise their Minds to those which are Divine, may not by the Impulse of Imagination and Attachment, fix their Hope and Confidence, against the Intention of the Church, in a certain particular and determinate material Representation; as if, by the means of it, there were a kind of Necessity, by which, and not otherwise, God and His Saints would be induced to lend a favourable Ear to any Petitions. This is to be done, as we have already said, by the Advice

Advice of Theologians and wise Persons, so that, in this manner, by the salutary Attention of the Ordinaries, the Simplicity of the People may be entirely preserved, from the pernicious Crime of Idolatry.



CHAPTER XVIII.

On other Popular Modes of Devotion.

LET us now take a short Review of those Modes, or rather Signs and Emblems of Devotion, which are scattered here and there among the People. Such are Medals, Agnus Dei, Beads, Pictures of Saints, the distinctive Marks of different Confraternities, and the like Excitements to Prayer and Devotion. These are very laudable, when wisely used and properly directed. If they *ultimately* tend to make us discharge with Fidelity, the high and important Duties we owe to God and our Neighbour, if they awaken us to a proper Sense of our Obligations as Christians in our respective states and conditions, and keep alive the Fervour of Devotion, as it is certain, a prudent Spirit of Piety can turn them to this important Account, no proper Objections can lie against them, though so frequently

derided by those of other Persuasions. It may also be said, that such Matters have, surely, in *themselves*, nothing of any positive Indecency, Impropriety, or Repugnance to true Piety in any respect; besides, that they are Matters of Free Choice, nor Impose any Obligation to make use of them. Those who do, provided they be well instructed and directed, cannot but draw from them Incentives to Devotion. It is well known how much Mankind are delighted with Novelty in all things. According to this principle, pious Men, from time to time, have given rise to many new devotional Practices, still, however, keeping in View the grand fundamental Principles of general Christian Piety; and, by this innocent Endeavour to please and catch Curiosity, to keep alive, or revive, the Devout Affections of the Heart. The World now being Old, and religious Persons having frequently, during the Course of Ages, endeavoured in this manner to feed the Devotion of the Faithful, it is not to be wondered at, if the old and the new Modes thereof combined, form a very great Bulk of pious Practices and Exercitations. Now such Modes, as we have said, or rather Emblems and Signs of *Devotion* (which must be *internal* to be really such) provided they be not disapproved of by the Church, but rather recommended expressly, are not only lawful, but laudable. If *Jurieu*, the Calvinist

nist Writer, and others of his Class, deride and condemn them, as if Superstition were really superinduced by the bare Introduction of these, as we may call them, *Minutiæ* of Piety, none of them has proved, nor ever can prove, that the Institution of them is blameable, and may displease God; nay, on the contrary, as they are expressly directed to His Honour, the stricter Observance of his Holy Commandments, and the pious Remembrance and Invocation of His Saints, all in entire Subordination to Him, they ought to be pleasing in His Sight, and meet with His Approbation.

It is most certain, that the Church does not place the *Essence* of Christian Devotion in those pious Modes which, from time to time, have been introduced to diversify the manner of exercising it, for the reason already assigned. Nevertheless, as they serve to nourish the Piety of the People, and also to invite and call them to that, which the *Essence* of Christianity principally requires and exacts; it is for this, that the Church praises and approves of them. We do not deny, but it may happen, that some simple and very ignorant Person among the Vulgar, may abuse such like minute Modes of Devotion, by imagining them to be sufficient to save his Soul, while, at the same time, he is not at all solicitous to reform his Life and Manners, and may place such Confidence in outward

outward Marks, or Badges of Devotion, that he will think himself secured thereby, from various temporal Evils, or imagine to himself, that he cannot die in mortal Sin, or that he will certainly obtain certain determinate Favours, by reciting certain Prayers for such a fixed and determinate Time. This, indeed, may possibly happen, but such Notions, Errors and Abuses, are the Offspring only of Ignorance, or the wilful Blindness of a Person who does not, and will not know what are the pure and holy Documents of the Catholic Church, in this particular. It is most indubitably certain, that every Superstition is sovereignly detested by Her, and each of these Abuses, besides many others which I omit, are forbidden, and laid under every Censure of Disapprobation. I will here recite on this Head, what we read in the Provincial Council held in Cambray in the Year 1565, Tit. 19th. *The People are to be taught, that to pray to the Saints for their Intercession, is very useful, to obtain from God, not only corporal and temporal Favours, but also such as are Spiritual and Eternal. But that the Vanity and Superstition of some are abominable, who pretend to promise, that those who are Devout to such or such a Saint, shall not depart this Life without the Benefit of the Sacraments, or that they shall meet with Success in such an Affair, and spread the Belief of Matters of a like nature having come to*
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pass, according to such Predictions. In like manner, are those to be absolutely reprov'd, who imagine, that such and such determinate Souls, shall be indubitably and infallibly deliver'd from Purgatory, for whom a certain fixt and determinate Number of Masses are celebrated, and after a singular Manner. It is certain, that the most holy Rites of Piety may be abus'd, when People imagine, that they shall certainly obtain what they should not promise themselves, and that the Simplicity of some ignorant Persons, may frustrate and betray the Intention of the pious Authors of many laudable Modes of Devotion. We know, that Secular Confraternities, somewhat in Imitation of Religious Orders, have been very wisely and properly instituted. And who will ever dare to say, that such are not pious and holy, since they unite themselves particularly on festival Days, to sing or recite the praises of God, of the Virgin Mother, or the Saints, on His account, as do the Ecclesiastics in Choir; as also, to practise other Acts of Christian Piety and Charity? It may indeed happen, that some Abuses, some Discord, and Contention, may sometimes arise in Confraternities, but they are not, surely, for this, to be condemned, since any Faults or Defects, are not to be attributed to those pious Societies in themselves, but to some few scattered here and there, who belong to them. For the same Reason,

Reason, it is but reasonable to confess the Devotion of the *Rosary* to be highly laudable, because it is most fitting to nourish the Piety of the People, who recite the prescribed Prayers, to recommend themselves to God, and to implore the Intercession of the Holy Virgin, with Him, in our behalf. It will become so much the more fruitful for those who know how, on this occasion, to meditate on the principal Mysteries of our Religion; which was at first, and is now, the primary End of this pious Institution. In fine, for the People in general who are not adapted to high Contemplation, such Societies are extremely useful to exercise their devout Affections, when they, in fraternal Union recite those Prayers which they know, with good Intentions of Heart towards God.

Our Devotion may also be excited with regard to the Souls in Purgatory, especially when we consider it as a *Duty* of Charity, sometimes of Justice, and extending to all the Faithful. It is a Doctrine of the Catholic Church, that the Living may procure Relief for Souls in this Situation, by shortening the time of their Exile, and facilitating the entrance into Paradise. Whoever loves the Memory of those who were dear to him, ought to remember them religiously, and help them to the best of his Power in the other Life, since where they are, they cannot help

help themselves : and those are so much the more bound to this, who by their means have received Life, Education, the Enjoyment of temporal Goods, and other Favours of any Kind. The different Modes of procuring them Relief, are collected from the Holy Fathers, and are expressed in the Council of *Trent*, viz. the ineffable Sacrifice of the Mass, Alms, Prayer and other Works of Piety, that are accustomed to be performed in favour of the faithful departed, according to the Institutions of the Church. Even from the first Ages of the Church, the Custom was to offer the unbloody Sacrifice, even for those who died in the Peace of the Lord. In like manner, from the Scriptures, and the Fathers, we learn the Efficacy of Alms to the Poor, and of the Prayers of the Faithful, to obtain from God eternal Rest to the Departed. Such is the Sum of what the Catholic Church proposes to us as being certainly of Faith. There are different Questions relative to Purgatory, treated of by Divines, such as the precise state of Souls therein, the Duration of their Detention, the Value of the Sacrifice in the Measure of its Application to them, and other similar Matters, but without sufficient Light to decide the greater part of them, as a bare opinion can only be formed relatively to them, not amounting to any certainty of Faith.

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There are many among the poor People, perhaps, who are troubled in Mind, because they cannot afford to order the Celebration of Masses for the Souls of their Relations, and are afflicted with the Idea, that for want thereof, they, as well as themselves, in time, will be left desolate and abandoned in the next Life. But to console them they should be apprized, that the Holy Church, in every Mass throughout the World, applies part of the Value of the Sacrifice, to *All* the Souls of those who have departed this Life without *mortal* Sin. In like manner, the Church also, in her Divine Offices, prays for them All. She dispenses Indulgences for the same purpose. Of so many Masses which are daily celebrated throughout the whole Church, the major part may be useless for the determinate Persons for whom they are offered, either because they are not in a proper State to benefit by them, or have passed to eternal Rest; in such a case, the Value of those Sacrifices redounds to the Benefit of other Souls, still in want of Aid. They should also consider, that there are other Modes likewise, of affording Assistance to the Faithful departed; whoever assists in the State of Grace, with proper Attention and Devotion, at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, being united, as we have already observed, with the Minister of the Altar, in the Performance of this grand Function, may afford no small
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Relief to the suffering Souls of his Relations, by applying to them the Value of the Sacrifice. Wherefore, at the Elevation and Adoration of the Body and Blood of the Lord; then the Christian ought, with a lively Confidence, to offer to the Almighty God, our Father, this heavenly Victim, beseeching Him, that for the Sake of His most Blessed Son, He would be propitious and merciful to the Souls of all those who were dear to him on Earth. We ought to hold for certain, that this Offering and Prayer will be fruitful to them, not, indeed, in consideration of us poor Sinners, who thus address Him, but on account of the infinite Merits of that Lamb who is then offered for those departed Souls, to our most merciful heavenly Father. Besides, the Value of Almsdeeds, and of Prayers, in any Place or Situation, in favour of the Dead, is to be considered; if they be not equal in power and influence to the unbloody Sacrifice, they still can do much, as we find from the holy Scriptures, and the Decrees of the Church. Can you not give Alms? You can then supplicate the Mercy of the great and good Lord of All, that he would be pleased to extend it to those who were dear to you, and your Prayers will be acceptable to Him, who has assured us, that if we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ, we shall obtain. Although the Alms were ever so small and trifling from him who
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can afford to give no more, in the Scales of the Lord they shall be valued at as much as the Gold of the Rich. This we are assured of from the Gospel. Wherefore, let not the Poor be dejected with the Idea, that the Souls of their Relations are destitute of Aid, and abandoned in the other Life. The Goodness and Mercy of God has provided for all. Let then their Terrors be dispelled, to give room to Hope and Confidence, their Dejection, to Peace and Consolation.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the External Devotion requisite for a Christian.

IT is a well known Principle, that the essential Substance of Devotion should be truly internal; that is, it should reside in a Heart well affected to God, and our Neighbour for the Love of God; in a Heart obedient to His Commandments, an humble Heart, and relying entirely on the Divine Aid. It is, nevertheless, our Duty to accompany this internal with an external Devotion, and that the Modesty and decent Propriety of our Appearance should accord, with a reverential Mind, when we present ourselves to obtain an Audience from God. We are bound to
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this external Decency, both with regard to God and our Neighbour. If we are wanting in Respect to Him who beholds us, our Neighbour will be either scandalized, or, from our Example, will learn to do the same. Wherefore, we should carefully endeavour to imprint on our Minds the highest Respect for the House of God. It is, surely, easy to conceive, how unbecoming it is in a Christian to appear therein without any Sense of the Awfulness of his Situation, to conduct himself, as if in the midst of an ordinary worldly Assembly, where thoughtless Dissipation is chiefly attended to, in passing Compliments, in frivolous Discourses, in spreading News, whether true or false, sometimes, perhaps, at the Expence of all Charity, in Criticisms on Dress, or, perhaps, in Looks too curious on dangerous Objects, at best indiscreet, and tending to raise Ideas horribly improper in such a Place, and on such an Occasion. We ought to appear there with all the Lowliness of wretched Sinners, who come for the purpose of humble Supplication, and not be ambitious to shine there as at a Theatre, or any other Place of public Amusement. The latter happens, because we conceive not a sufficiently lively Idea of the Presence of God, and that we do not reflect on the important, the awful Purposes for which His Holy House was designed; not less than to address Himself in Person, and implore His

His Almighty Power and Goodness for whatever Favours we want. How much more does not God exact this reverential Devotion, internal and external, during the actual Celebration of the holy Mysteries of the ineffable Sacrifice of the Mass? How beautiful, how edifying, is it to behold such of the Faithful who assist at the sacred Functions of the Church, with the most profound Respect and Veneration in their Looks, who, with downcast Eyes, praise, adore, and pray to the Most-High, and with bended Knees, but still more with lowly and humble Hearts, render their sincere Tribute of supreme Homage and Worship, to that God, and that Lord, whom, indeed, they behold not, but with a lively Faith, believe to be present, and giving a kind and complying Attention to their Requests and Petitions.

But if there are some reprehensible for their little *external* Devotion, it might happen that others may be found, who would make of their outward Appearance, a commodious Cloak for Hypocrisy, outwardly, indeed, innocent Lambs, but within rapacious Wolves. Such have been described by our Divine Master, in more than one Place of the holy Gospels, as in his Time the Number of them, it seems, was very great. Whether we have any such in our Days, let us, by all means, avoid all hastiness or rashness in the Decision. We shall only observe, that this vile and infamous

famous Vice, is even worse than all the Wickedness of public Sinners, who do not endeavour to deceive, at least, either God or Man, while Hypocrites, if they cannot deceive exert their Invention, perhaps, to deceive, God, and, even to seduce, in one respect or other, those who are not on their guard against them. There is likewise a kind of affected Devotion, into which some may fall, not, indeed, for any evil End, but through Simplicity, and the want of knowing the proper and reasonable Bounds of *external* Devotion; such as, praying too loud, groaning to the Disturbance of others, sudden Exclamations, rocking to and fro, ungraceful Contortions and Grimaces, too frequent and ill-timed striking the Breast, and the like. These things may make others imagine, that they have an Affectation and Wish of being deemed more pious and devout than the rest of the Congregation. Profound Gravity, solid Seriousness, awful Prayer, without noise or murmur, the Eyes either cast down or fixed upon the Altar alone, (*and not upon the Priest or his Vestments,*) and an exclusive reverential Attention to the sacred Mysteries, and the proper times of kneeling or standing; such are the chief Outlines of that Demeanour which will be most likely to contribute to true and solid Edification. Some Singularities may excite Laughter, wherefore the above Rules are proper, for this and other weighty Reasons,

Reason to regulate our *external* Devotion, to make it worthy, as far as in our power lies, of the Place, the Occasion, and the unspeakable awful Grandeur of Him, who sits enthroned in all the Glory of Omnipotence. But let us now take a summary View of the whole Design, and advance to the Conclusion of this Work.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

The Conclusion of this Work.

FROM all that has been already said, we may now collect, that the *ESSENTIAL* DEVOTION requisite in a Christian, by his Profession, *chiefly* and *principally* consists in the Love of God, and his Neighbour; this Love is to be made known more in Deeds than in Words, and consequently to fly Evil, as displeasing to God, and to chuse Good, as commanded and counselled likewise by Him. In order to attain this great, this important End, we have seen what means are *necessary*, and what are *useful*. In like manner we may discern, that, it is but a *Superficial* Devotion which does not correct our Vices, which is confined to the meer *external* Exercise of Piety, without regulating the Affections of the Heart, and making them obedient and

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subservient to the Law of God. Without this, what, indeed, will serve a remarkable plainness and simplicity of Dress, Gravity of Countenance, a mortified Look, and even a consummate Knowledge of Theology and spiritual Matters? These are but indecisive and equivocal Signs, and it may happen that People of this cast do not possess true and solid Piety and Devotion. To determine the Question, we should look into and examine their Hearts. If *spiritual Pride* should unhappily reside therein, too high an Estimation of themselves, and Humility, the Basis of all other Virtues, be wanting; if their otherwise good Works should not proceed from true Charity, and the excessive and inordinate Love of themselves should reign in their Minds, in the place of that which they owe to God and their Neighbour, what are they after all, but *tinkling Cymbals*, which make an unmeaning and useless Noise, as a mere Nothing in the Sight of God? Neither the Recitation of Prayers, Hymns or Psalms, nor Fasting, nor ostentatious Alms-Deeds, or any other similar *Signs* of Devotion will procure them the Honour and the Advantages of real and true Devotion. Let us consider a poor ignorant Man, who gets his Bread by the Sweat of his Brow, who after having early in the Morning heard Mass, (if he could possibly spare Time) humbly adored his Creator, and warmly recommended himself to
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Him to the best of his little Knowledge and Abilities, betakes himself for the whole Day to his honest Industry, with Patience and Resignation to his Lot, to earn Bread for himself and his Family; who is mild and well-tempered within the Circle of his little Habitation, civil and humble to all, an Enemy to all manner of Fraud, to all *curfing and swearing, to the beastly Vice of Drunkenness*, to filthy Expressions, to Riots and Quarrels; in fine, to all unseemly, disedifying, and unchristian Conduct. Such a Man, indeed, however poor and lowly his Condition, makes it well known, by the Tenor of his Life, that he, in reality, is infinitely better acquainted with the Knowledge of *true and real* Devotion, than the most learned themselves, whose Conduct is not sufficiently squared, by all their Progress in the Science of their *speculative* Devotion. Let us also consider a married Woman, who, jealous of her Virtue and purity of Morals, and far from desiring to partake of any Amusements in the least dangerous thereto, on the contrary, flies and abhors them; who bears with Meekness, and in Silence, the ill usage of an irrational and boisterous Husband, who, patiently and diligently attends to her domestic Affairs, and the right and truly Christian Education of her Children, having scarcely an Hour on Festival Days to partake of the Sacraments, and for all the rest of the Day obliged to stay at home

home to take care of her tender, helpless Offspring, which she does, without Discontent or Impatience, while others spend some Hours, but to little solid purpose, in a place of Worship, or, perhaps, amuse themselves in loitering about, or in some more sinful waste of Time, particularly, in the shameful Vice of Drunkenness. It may be that such a Person is more advanced in true and genuine Piety and Devotion, than those who imagine, that by a number of external Acts thereof, they may be considered as excellent Models for Imitation. Let us not then look for it in mere Appearances; it will be more surely found in the Heart of whoever walks with Simplicity and Sincerity before God, content with that Situation in which divine Providence has placed him, and attentive to fulfil all that God exacts from him in that State, with a sincere and strong Desire to do, in all things, not his own Will, but that of God; as, likewise, has an utter Abhorrence of whatever he knows or imagines to be displeasing to his Sovereign Lord and Master, and a constant Study, every Day, to advance more and more towards the Perfection of his particular State and Condition. We are apt to consider as devout, those, in particular, who spend a great deal of Time in Places of Worship, and frequently approach the Sacraments, because they have their Time at their own disposal, or, at least, make it so; who recite a vast number of Pray-

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ers, and, perhaps, they are so; it were highly uncharitable to make any precipitate Decision with respect to any Individual: But if it should happen, that their Hearts are divided between God and the World, such Persons, endeavouring to serve two Masters at the same Time, by nourishing a sharp and bitter Severity of Opinion and Judgment with respect to others, secret Dislikes and Antipathies, by an Impatience and Fretfulness of Temper, that nothing can please, an high Opinion of themselves, an haughty Contempt of others, a strong Propensity to give, at least, mysterious, undermining Hints, by which the Character of their Neighbour is, perhaps, very materially affected: By these, and the like Blemishes, they will deform and disfigure all their Devotion.

Let us not then deceive ourselves; the Cares and Application of a Christian are above all to be employed in attaining to that true and substantial Devotion, of which we have the clear Documents and Instructions in the sacred Writings, and which the holy Fathers have unitedly handed down to us, and is authenticated by the Practice of the Saints, in every Age. Whatever does not lead to this, can never merit the name of solid Devotion. If our devotional Practices have not an efficient tendency to mortify in us all our irregular Passions, Pride, Self-Love and Vanity, and to produce in us the true Love of God and our Neighbour; they will, at best, be but superficial,

ficial, where Substance is entirely wanting. It is certain, that if we suffer ourselves to be impressed with the Idea that we are really devout, on the merit solely of reciting a great number of Prayers every Day, as a kind of daily Task, or a certain determinate Prayer, or Prayers, for which we have formed a strong Predilection, or by ardent Devotion to some Saint, whose Example, however, we do not dwell upon, or wearing certain Badges of different religious Societies, or carrying Relics about us, or the like, without attending to reform and amend our Life, by conforming it to that of Jesus Christ, our most excellent and divine Model, and of those who have carefully laboured in this so necessary a Conformity, we shall most absurdly flatter ourselves, and find ourselves most miserably deceived at the awful Hour of Death. These unsubstantial empty Appearances of Devotion, will vanish into Air, all these Signs will fleet away like Shadows; the *nuptial Garment* of *Charity* will be wanting, and any other Cloathing or Badge of Devotion, without it, will never entitle us to Admission into Paradise.

We have likewise already seen, that there are some minor species of Devotion which are irregular in themselves, on account of the false Ideas they generally produce, and strongly tend to Superstition; or else, although very laudable when properly directed, through Ignorance, or want of proper Reflexion, may

become blameable and superstitious. There are certainly but few things either holily or wisely instituted in the World, which the Folly or Perverseness of Mankind may not turn to Abuse. The Sacraments themselves have been sometimes abused, for the purpose of wicked and nefarious Superstitions. Wherefore, a prudent Christian ought to walk with Circumspection, and to take particular Notice, in the first place, whether such a Mode of Devotion, for Instance, proceeds from the Church herself, and be earnestly recommended to us from that Quarter; and secondly, to examine whether, perhaps, popular Ignorance, Prejudices, a wrong Interpretation, or misguided Bias, may not have sown Tares in the midst of the Wheat. Let us hear St. Augustine to this purpose: *I cannot approve, (says the holy Doctor,) certain Matters instituted out of the Custom of the Church, and proposed to be observed, as if there was Question of a Sacrament, al though I do not venture to reprove many of them with full Liberty, in order to avoid giving Scandal to some, either pious and well-meaning, or turbulent Persons.** By this we may understand how irrational it is to place all our Confidence in some favourite devotional Practices, and think ourselves sufficiently devout thereby, while, at the same time, we neglect and pass over the great and *essential* Devotion prescribed to us by the Almighty God, and strongly inculcat-

* *Epist. 55th to Januarius.*

ed throughout the whole Body of the Catholic Church. These Practices in themselves may be very innocent, nay, very good; but if, through our own Fault, they have not a Tendency to a Devotion of a *superior* Order, what will they avail us? How much less if they be, perhaps, superstitious in themselves, or by various strange Abuses, strongly incline and verge towards Superstition? Whoever will turn over the Councils of the Church of God, and the Decrees of the Sovereign Pontiffs, will find many pretended Modes of Devotion, either stifled in their Birth, or entirely taken away, although of antient Institution, because Excesses and Abuses were grafted on them. Whenever any Irregularities and Improprieties of this Nature are denounced to the Apostolic See, it does not fail to provide a proper Remedy. Who is there that does not know how many too relaxed Opinions in Morality, or contrary to the Purity of the Faith, have been proscribed and anathematized, for these hundred Years past, by the Sovereign Pontiffs? There were introduced, in various Places, Confraternities under the Title of, *The Slaves of the Mother of God*, and this irregular Mode of Devotion, injurious to God, was, by Order of *Clement X.* on the 5th of July, 1673, annulled and prohibited. There were enormous Abuses, with respect to the proper and holy Use of *Indulgences*, of which very many were introduced, utterly founded on Falsehood:

Falsehood: *Innocent XI* brought them all under Examination, and having found an incredible number of them, either forged, or not thoroughly authentic, in the Month of *March* 1678, he had them all declared null and forbidden. The same Pope prohibited a certain Office of the immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin. That zealous Pontiff *Benedict XIV.* prohibited a similar Work in the Year 1742. Thus we see, that all Extravagancies in Devotion, all superstitious Errors and Abuses, when formally denounced to the holy See, always meet with their deserved Destiny, because they are absolutely incompatible with the Purity of the Christian and Catholic Religion.

There may be certain little petty Abuses, here and there, unknown to the Church, because not properly denounced and brought before her Tribunal for Examination and Discussion, and with respect to these, the great St. *Augustine** gives it as his Opinion, that private Persons may point them out, (always certainly with Charity, Prudence and Discretion,) because the Honour of Religion is the Honour of All, and the Good of the Faithful is in Question. When it appears that the Catholics themselves reprobate the bad Leaven, and make it known, that it unhappily affects indeed some misguided and mistaken People of their Body, but that it is very far from being naturally blended with the Catholic Church, every Pre-

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* *Epist. 55th to Januarius.*

text will be taken away for Sneers, Railleries, Contempt and Derision, on the part of those of other Persuasions, which they deal about so liberally, for certain whimsical Irregularities they might have observed, inevitable, however, while Men are Men, in every Institution, however perfect. Are there never any Improprieties, or Superstitions of one kind or other, in Protestant Countries? To me they have not denied it themselves. It is, in particular, the Duty of all Pastors to watch attentively over all matters which are deemed Devotional, to prevent or eradicate any Abuses, to correct Errors, and make every thing tend to the greater Advancement of the Glory of God, the proper Observance of His holy Commandments, and the Salvation of Souls: This should be also the grand Object of all the public Instructors of the People. The holy Religion of Jesus Christ is so well founded, that it needs not, indeed, the spurious Aid of false invented Miracles, or any other Frauds, Lies or Deceptions, no Artifice or Dissimulation, nor does it dread the Discovery of any Disorders, Improprieties or Irregularities, because they belong not to Her, are by no means her genuine Offspring, but proceed from the Love of Novelty, Vanity, Simplicity, or Ignorance. The Conclusion of all that we have said hitherto is this. When we attach ourselves to those Modes of Devotion, which are *especially* and *primarily* recommended and enforced by the Gospel and
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the Church of God, we shall never be the Dupes of any Error : Firm, solid and unshaken will the Foundation be on which we erect our Edifice, to which perpetual Stability will be inseparably annexed. Although the Modes of Devotion we may chuse to practice, should be entirely lawful and highly laudable ; yet, if it should so happen, through our Inattention to their just and proper tendency, that they do not foment or increase in us the Love of God and our Neighbour, in which consists the grand Plenitude of the Law, they become, or rather we ourselves, unhappily render them *superficial*. If they should happen to be, in fine, such as the Church has never stamped with Approbation, but rather have been, either tacitly, or expressly, reprobated by Her, because, having a kind of strong and natural Tendency to *Superstition*, they should be held in Abhorrence, and the Exposition of them as such, in their natural Colours, must be ever attended with the best Effects, for the Glory of Religion, the Honor of her holy Documents, and the general popular Instruction and Edification.



F I N I S.

